Grettir’s Saga

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Grettir’s Saga

Chapter 1

There was a man named Onund, who was the son of Ufeigh Clubfoot, the son of Ivar the Smiter; Onund was brother of Gudbiorg, the mother of Gudbrand Ball, the father of Asta, the mother of King Olaf the Saint. Onund was an Uplander by the kin of his mother; but the kin of his father dwelt chiefly about Rogaland and Hordaland. He was a great viking, and went harrying west over the Sea. Balk of Sotanes, the son of Blaeng, was with him herein, and Orm the Wealthy withal, and Hallvard was the name of the third of them. They had five ships, all well manned, and therewith they harried in the South-isles; and when they came to Barra, they found there a king, called Kiarval, and he, too, had five ships. They gave him battle, and a hard fray there was. The men of Onund were of the eagerest, and on either side many fell; but the end of it was that the king fled with only one ship. So there the men of Onund took both ships and much wealth, and abode there through the winter. For three summers they harried throughout Ireland and Scotland, and thereafter went to Norway.

Chapter 2

In those days were there great troubles in Norway. Harald the Unshorn, son of Halfdan the Black, was pushing forth for the kingdom. Before that he was King of the Uplands; then he went north through the land, and had many battles there, and ever won the day. Thereafter he harried south in the land, and wheresoever he came, laid all under him; but when he came to Hordaland, swarms of folk came thronging against him; and their captains were Kiotvi the Wealthy, and Thorir Longchin, and those of South Rogaland, and King Sulki. Geirmund Helskin was then in the west over the Sea; nor was he in that battle, though he had a kingdom in Hordaland.

Now that autumn Onund and his fellows came from the west over the Sea; and when Thorir Longchin and King Kiotvi heard thereof, they sent men to meet them, and prayed them for help, and promised them honours. Then they entered into fellowship with Thorir and his men; for they were exceeding fain to try their strength, and said that there would they be whereas the fight was hottest.

Now was the meeting with Harald the King in Rogaland, in that firth which is called Hafrsfirth; and both sides had many men. This was the greatest battle that has ever been fought in Norway, and hereof most Sagas tell; for of those is ever most told, of whom the Sagas are made; and thereto came folk from all the land, and many from other lands and swarms of vikings.

Now Onund laid his ship alongside one board of the ship of Thorir Longchin, about the midst of the fleet, but King Harald laid his on the other board, because Thorir was the greatest bearserk, and the stoutest of men; so the fight was of the fiercest on either side. Then the king cried on his bearserks for an onslaught, and they were called the Wolf-coats, for on them would no steel bite, and when they set on nought might withstand them. Thorir defended him very stoutly, and fell in all hardihood on board his ship; then was it cleared from stem to stern, and cut from the grapplings, and let drift astern betwixt the other ships. Thereafter the king’s men laid their ship alongside Onund’s, and he was in the forepart thereof and fought manly; then the king’s folk said, "Lo, a forward man in the forecastle there, let him have somewhat to mind him how that he was in this battle." Now Onund put one foot out over the bulwark and dealt a blow at a man, and even therewith a spear was aimed at him, and as he put the blow from him he bent backward withal, and one of the king’s forecastle men smote at him, and the stroke took his leg below the knee and sheared it off, and forthwith made him unmeet for fight. Then fell the more part of the folk on board his ship; but Onund was brought to the ship of him who is called

Thrand; he was the son of Biorn, and brother of Eyvind the Eastman; he was in the fight against King Harald and lay on the other board of Onund's ship.

But now, after these things, the more part of the fleet scattered in flight; Thrand and his men, with the other vikings, got them away each as he might, and sailed west over the Sea; Onund went with him, and Balk and Hallvard Sweeping; Onund was healed, but went with a wooden leg all his life after; therefore as long as he lived was he called Onund Treefoot.

Chapter 3

At that time were many great men west over the Sea, such as had fled from their lands in Norway before King Harald, because he had made all those outlaws, who had met him in battle, and taken to him their possessions. So, when Onund was healed of his wounds, he and Thrand went to meet Geirmund Helskin, because he was the most famed of vikings west there over the Sea, and they asked him whether he had any mind to seek after that kingdom which he had in Hordaland, and offered him their fellowship herein; for they deemed they had a sore loss of their lands there, since Onund was both mighty and of great kin.

Geirmund said that so great had grown the strength of King Harald, that he deemed there was little hope that they would win honour in their war with him when men had been worsted, even when all the folk of the land had been drawn together; and yet withal that he was loth to become a king's thrall and pray for that which was his own; that he would find somewhat better to do than that; and now, too, he was no longer young. So Onund and his fellows went back to the South-isles, and there met many of their friends.

There was a man, Ufeigh by name, who was bynamed Grettir; he was the son of Einar, the son of Olvir Bairn-Carle; he was brother to Oleif the Broad, the father of Thormod Shaft; Steinulf was the name of Olvir Bairn-Carle's son, he was the father of Una whom Thorbiorn Salmon-Carle had to wife. Another son of Olvir Bairn-Carle was Steinmod, the father of Konal, who was the father of Aldis of Barra. The son of Konal was Steinmod, the father of Haldora, the wife of Eilif, the son of Ketil the Onehanded. Ufeigh Grettir had to wife Asny, the daughter of Vestar Haengson; and Asmund the Beardless and Asbiorn were the sons of Ufeigh Grettir, but his daughters were these, Aldis, and Asa, and Asvor. Ufeigh had fled away west over the Sea before Harald the king, and so had Thormod Shaft his kinsman, and had with them their kith and kin; and they harried in Scotland, and far and wide west beyond the sea.

Now Thrand and Onund Treefoot made west for Ireland to find Eyvind the Eastman, Thrand's brother, who was Land-ward along the coasts of Ireland; the mother of Eyvind was Hlif, the daughter of Rolf, son of Ingiald, the son of King Frodi; but Thrand's mother was Helga, the daughter of Ondott the Crow; Biorn was the name of the father of Eyvind and Thrand, he was the son of Rolf from Am; he had had to flee from Gothland, for that he had burned in his house Sigfast, the son-in-law of King Solver; and thereafter had he gone to Norway, and was the next winter with Grim the hersir, the son of Kolbiorn the Abasher. Now Grim had a mind to murder Biorn for his money, so he fled thence to Ondott the Crow, who dwelt in Hvinisfirth in Agdir; he received Biorn well, and Biorn was with him in the winter, but was in warfare in summer-tide, until Hlif his wife died; and after that Ondott gave Biorn Helga his daughter, and then Biorn left off warring.

Now thereon Eyvind took to him the war-ships of his father, and was become a great chief west over the Sea; he wedded Rafarta, the daughter of Kiarval, King of Ireland; their sons were Helgi the Lean and Snaebiorn.

So when Thrand and Onund came to the South-isles, there they met Ufeigh Grettir and Thormod Shaft, and great friendship grew up betwixt them, for each thought he had gained from hell the last who had been left behind in Norway while the troubles there were at the highest. But Onund was exceeding moody, and when Thrand marked it, he asked what he was brooding over in his mind. Onund answered, and sang this stave

"What joy since that day can I get
When shield-fire's thunder last I met;
Ah, too soon clutch the claws of ill;
For that axe-edge shall grieve me still.
In eyes of fighting man and thane,
My strength and manhood are but vain,
This is the thing that makes me grow
A joyless man; is it enow?"

Thrand answered that whereso he was, he would still be deemed a brave man, "And now it is meet for thee to settle down and get married, and I would put forth my word and help, if I but knew whereto thou lookest."

Onund said he did in manly wise, but that his good hope for matches of any gain was gone by now.

Thrand answered, "Ufeigh has a daughter who is called Asa, thitherward will we turn if it seem good to thee." Onund showed that he was willing enough hereto; so afterwards they talked the matter over with Ufeigh; he answered well, and said that he knew how that Onund was a man of great kin and rich of chattels; "but his lands," said he, "I put at low worth, nor do I deem him to be a hale man, and withal my daughter is but a child."

Thrand said, that Onund was a brisker man yet than many who were hale of both legs, and so by Thrand's help was this bargain struck; Ufeigh was to give his daughter but chattels for dowry, because those lands that were in Norway neither would lay down any money for.

A little after Thrand wooed the daughter of Thormod Shaft, and both were to sit in troth for three winters.

So thereafter they went a harrying in the summer, but were in Barra in the winter-tide.

Chapter 4

There were two vikings called Vigbiod and Vestmar; they were South-islanders, and lay out both winter and summer; they had thirteen ships, and harried mostly in Ireland, and did many an ill deed there till Eyvind the Eastman took the land-wardship; thereafter they got them gone to the South-isles, and harried there and all about the firths of Scotland: against these went Thrand and Onund, and heard that they had sailed to that island, which is called Bute. Now Onund and his folk came there with five ships; and when the vikings see their ships and know how many they are, they deem they have enough strength gathered there, and take their weapons and lay their ships in the midst betwixt two cliffs, where was a great and deep sound; only on one side could they be set on, and that with but five ships at once. Now Onund was the wisest of men, and bade lay five ships up into the sound, so that he and his might have back way when they would, for there was plenty of sea-room astern. On one board of them too was a certain island, and under the lee thereof he let one ship lie, and his men brought many great stones forth on to the sheer cliffs above, yet might not be seen withal from the ships.

Now the vikings laid their ships boldly enough for the attack, and thought that the others quailed; and Vigbiod asked who they were that were in such jeopardy. Thrand said that he was the brother of Eyvind the Eastman, "and here beside me is Onund Treefoot my fellow."

Then laughed the vikings, and shouted

"Treefoot, Treefoot, foot of tree,
Trolls take thee and thy company."

"Yea, a sight it is seldom seen of us, that such men should go into battle as have no might over themselves."

Onund said that they could know nought thereof ere it were tried; and withal they laid their ships alongside one of the other, and there began a great fight, and either side did boldly. But when they came to handy blows, Onund gave back toward the cliff, and when the vikings saw this, they deemed he was minded to flee, and made towards his ship, and came as nigh to the cliff as they might. But in that very point of time those came forth on to the edge of the cliff who were appointed so to do, and sent at the vikings so great a flight of stones that they might not withstand it.

Then fell many of the viking-folk, and others were hurt so that they might not bear weapon; and withal they were fain to draw back, and might not, because their ships were even then come into the narrowest of the sound, and they were huddled together both by the ships and the stream; but Onund and his men set on fiercely, whereas Vigbiod was, but Thrand set on Vestmar, and won little thereby; so, when the folk were thinned on Vigbiod’s ship, Onund’s men and Onund himself got ready to board her: that Vigbiod saw, and cheered on his men without stint: then he turned to meet Onund, and the more part fled before him; but Onund bade his men mark how it went between them; for he was of huge strength. Now they set a log of wood under Onund’s knee, so that he stood firmly enow; the viking fought his way forward along the ship till he reached Onund, and he smote at him with his sword, and the stroke took the shield, and sheared off all it met; and then the sword drove into the log that Onund had under his knee, and stuck fast therein; and Vigbiod stooped in drawing it out, and even therewith Onund smote at his shoulder in such wise, that he cut the arm from off him, and then was the viking unmeet for battle.

But when Vestmar knew that his fellow was fallen, he leaped into the furthermost ship and fled with all those who might reach her. Thereafter they ransacked the fallen men; and by then was Vigbiod nigh to his death: Onund went up to him, and sang

"Yea, seest thou thy wide wounds bleed?
What of shrinking didst thou heed
In the one-foot sling of gold?
What scratch here dost thou behold?
And in e’en such wise as this
Many an axe-breaker there is
Strong of tongue and weak of hand:
Tried thou wert, and might’st not stand."

So there they took much spoil and sailed back to Barra in the autumn.

Chapter 5

The summer after this they made ready to fare west to Ireland. But at that time Balk and Hallvard betook themselves from the lands west over the sea, and went out to Iceland, for from thence came tales of land good to choose. Balk settled land in Ramfirth and dwelt at either Balkstead; Hallvard settled Sweepingsfirth, and Hallwick out to the Stair, and dwelt there.

Now Thrand and Onund met Eyvind the Eastman, and he received his brother well; but when he knew that Onund was come with him, then he waxed wroth, and would fain set on him. Thrand bade him do it not, and said that it was not for him to wage war against Northmen, and least of all such men as fared peaceably. Eyvind said that he fared otherwise before, and had broken the peace of Kiarval the King, and that he should now pay for all. Many words the brothers had over this, till Thrand said at last that one fate should befall both him and Onund; and then Eyvind let himself be appeased.

So they dwelt there long that summer, and went on warfare with Eyvind, who found Onund to be the bravest of men. In the autumn they fared to the South-isles, and Eyvind gave to Thrand to take all the heritage of their father, if Biorn should die before Thrand.

Now were the twain in the South-isles until they wedded their wives, and some winters after withal.

Chapter 6

And now it came to pass that Biorn, the father of Thrand, died; and when Grim the hersir hears thereof he went to meet Ondott Crow, and claimed the goods left by Biorn; but Ondott said that Thrand had the heritage after his father; Grim said that Thrand was west over seas, and that Biorn was a Gothlander of kin, and that the king took the heritage of all outland men. Ondott said that he should keep the goods for the hands of Thrand, his daughter’s son; and therewith Grim gat him gone, and had nought for his claiming the goods.

Now Thrand had news of his father’s death, and straightway got ready to go from the South-isles, and Onund Treefoot with him; but Ufeigh Grettir and Thormod Shaft went out to Iceland with their kith and kin, and came out to the Eres in the south country, and dwelt the first winter with Thorbiorn Salmon-Carle.

Thereafter they settled Gnup-Wards’-rape, Ufeigh, the outward part, between Thwart-river and Kalf-river, and he dwelt at Ufeigh’s-stead by Stone-holt; but Thormod settled the eastward part, and abode at Shaft-holt.

The daughters of Thormod were these: Thorvor, mother of Thorod the Godi of Hailti, and Thora, mother of Thorstein, the Godi, the father of Biarni the Sage.

Now it is to be said of Thrand and Onund that they sailed from the lands west over the Sea toward Norway, and had fair wind, and such speed, that no rumour of their voyage was abroad till they came to Ondott Crow.

He gave Thrand good welcome, and told him how Grim the hersir had claimed the heritage left by Biorn. "Meeter it seems to me, kinsman," said he, "that thou take the heritage of thy father and not king’s-thralls; good luck has befallen thee, in that none knows of thy coming, but it misdoubts me that Grim will come upon one or other of us if he may; therefore I would that thou shouldst take the inheritance to thee, and get thee gone to other lands."

Thrand said that so he would do, he took to him the chattels and got away from Norway at his speediest; but before he sailed into the sea, he asked Onund Treefoot whether he would not make for Iceland with him; Onund said he would first go see his kin and friends in the south country.

Thrand said, "Then must we part now, but I would that thou shouldst aid my kin, for on them will vengeance fall if I get off clear; but to Iceland shall I go, and I would that thou withal shouldst make that journey."

Onund gave his word to all, and they parted in good love. So Thrand went to Iceland, and Ufeigh and Thormod Shaft received him well. Thrand dwelt at Thrand's-holt, which is west of Steer's-river.

Chapter 7

Onund went south to Rogaland, and met there many of his kin and friends; he dwelt there in secret at a man's called Kolbein. Now he heard that the king had taken his lands to him and set a man thereover who was called Harek, who was a farmer of the king's; so on a night Onund went to him, and took him in his house; there Harek was led out and cut down, and Onund took all the chattels they found and burnt the homestead; and thereafter he abode in many places that winter.

But that autumn Grim the hersir slew Ondott Crow, because he might not get the heritage-money for the king; and that same night of his slaying, Signy, his wife, brought aboard ship all her chattels, and fared with her sons, Asmund and Asgrim, to Sighvat her father; but a little after sent her sons to Soknadale to Hedin her foster-father; but that seemed good to them but for a little while, and they would fain go back again to their mother; so they departed and came at Yule-tide to Ingiald the Trusty at Hvin; he took them in because of the urgency of Gyda his wife, and they were there the winter through. But in spring came Onund north to Agdir, because he had heard of the slaying of Ondott Crow; but when he found Signy he asked her what help she would have of him.

She said that she would fain have vengeance on Grim the hersir for the slaying of Ondott. Then were the sons of Ondott sent for, and when they met Onund Treefoot, they made up one fellowship together, and had spies abroad on the doings of Grim. Now in the summer was a great ale-drinking held at Grim's, because he had bidden to him Earl Audun; and when Onund and the sons of Ondott knew thereof they went to Grim's homestead and laid fire to the house, for they were come there unawares, and burnt Grim the hersir therein, and nigh thirty men, and many good things they took there withal. Then went Onund to the woods, but the sons of Ondott took a boat of Ingiald's, their foster-father's, and rowed away therein, and lay hid a little way off the homestead. Earl Audun came to the feast, even as had been settled afore, and there "missed friend from stead." Then he gathered men to him, and dwelt there some nights, but nought was heard of Onund and his fellows; and the Earl slept in a loft with two men.

Onund had full tidings from the homestead, and sent after those brothers; and, when they met, Onund asked them whether they would watch the farm or fall on the Earl; but they chose to set on the Earl. So they drove beams at the loft-doors and broke them in; then Asmund caught hold of the two who were with the Earl, and cast them down so hard that they were well-nigh slain; but Asgrim ran at the Earl, and bade him render up weregild for his father, since he had been in the plot and the onslaught with Grim the hersir when Ondott Crow was slain. The Earl said he had no money with him there, and prayed for delay of that payment. Then Asgrim set his spear-point to the Earl's breast and bade him pay there and then; so the Earl took a chain from his neck, and three gold rings, and a cloak of rich web, and gave them up. Asgrim took the goods and gave the Earl a name, and called him Audun Goaty.

But when the bonders and neighbouring folk were ware that war was come among them, they went abroad and would bring help to the Earl, and a hard fight there was, for Onund had many men, and there fell many good bonders and courtmen of the Earl. Now came the brothers, and told how they had fared with the Earl, and Onund said that it was ill that he was not slain, "that would have been somewhat of a revenge on the King for our loss at his hands of fee and friends." They said that this was a greater shame to the Earl; and therewith they went away up to Sorreldale to Eric Alefain, a king’s lord, and he took them in for all the winter.

Now at Yule they drank turn and turn about with a man called Hallstein, who was bynamed Horse; Eric gave the first feast, well and truly, and then Hallstein gave his, but thereat was there bickering between them, and Hallstein smote Eric with a deer-horn; Eric gat no revenge therefor, but went home straightway. This sore misliked the sons of Ondott, and a little after Asgrim fared to Hallstein’s homestead, and went in alone, and gave him a great wound, but those who were therein sprang up and set on Asgrim. Asgrim defended himself well and got out of their hands in the dark; but they deemed they had slain him.

Onund and Asmund heard thereof and supposed him dead, but deemed they might do nought. Eric counselled them to make for Iceland, and said that would be of no avail to abide there in the land (i.e. in Norway), as soon as the king should bring matters about to his liking. So this they did, and made them ready for Iceland and had each one ship. Hallstein lay wounded, and died before Onund and his folk sailed. Kolbein withal, who is afore mentioned, went abroad with Onund.

Chapter 8

Now Onund and Asmund sailed into the sea when they were ready, and held company together; then sang Onund this stave

"Meet was I in days agone
For storm, wherein the Sweeping One,
Midst rain of swords, and the darts’ breath,
Blew o’er all a gale of death.
Now a maimed, one-footed man
On rollers’ steed through waters wan
Out to Iceland must I go;
Ah, the skald is sinking low."

They had a hard voyage of it and much of baffling gales from the south, and drove north into the main; but they made Iceland, and were by then come to the north off Longness when they found where they were: so little space there was betwixt them that they spake together; and Asmund said that they had best sail to Islefirth, and thereto they both agreed; then they beat up toward the land, and a south-east wind sprang up; but when Onund and his folk laid the ship close to the wind, the yard was sprung; then they took in sail, and therewith were driven off to sea; but Asmund got under the lee of Brakeisle, and there lay till a fair wind brought him into Islefirth; Helgi the Lean gave him all Kraeklings’ lithe, and he dwelt at South Glass-river; Asgrim his brother came out some winters later and abode at North Glass-river; he was the father of Ellida-Grim, the father of Asgrim Ellida-Grimson.

Chapter 9

Now it is to be told of Onund Treefoot that he drave out to sea for certain days, but at last the wind got round to the north, and they sailed for land: then those knew who had been there before that they had come west off the Skagi; then they sailed into Strand-Bay, and near to the South-Strands, and there rowed toward them six men in a ten-oared boat, who hailed the big ship, and asked who was their captain; Onund named himself, and asked whence they came; they said they were house-carles of Thorvald, from Drangar; Onund asked if all land through the Strands had been settled; they said there was little unsettled in the inner Strands, and none north thereof. Then Onund asked his shipmates, whether they would make for the west country, or take such as they had been told of; they chose to view the land first. So they sailed in up the bay, and brought to in a creek off Arness, then put forth a boat and rowed to land. There dwelt a rich man, Eric Snare, who had taken land betwixt Ingolfs-firth, and Ufoera in Fishless; but when Eric knew that Onund was come there, he bade him take of his hands whatso he would, but said that there was little that had not been settled before. Onund said he would first see what there was, so they went landward south past some firths, till they came to Ufoera; then said Eric, "Here is what there is to look to; all from here is unsettled, and right in to the settlements of Biorn." Now a great mountain went down the eastern side of the firth, and snow had fallen thereon, Onund looked on that mountain, and sang

"Brand-whetter’s life awry doth go.
Fair lands and wide full well I know;
Past house, and field, and fold of man,
The swift steed of the rollers ran:
My lands, and kin, I left behind,
That I this latter day might find,
Coldback for sunny meads to have;
Hard fate a bitter bargain drave."

Eric answered, "Many have lost so much in Norway, that it may not be bettered: and I think withal that most lands in the main-settlements are already settled, and therefore I urge thee not to go from hence; but I shall hold to what I spake, that thou mayst have whatso of my lands seems meet to thee." Onund said, that he would take that offer, and so he settled land out from Ufoera over the three creeks, Byrgis Creek, Kolbein’s Creek, and Coldback Creek, up to Coldback Cleft. Thereafter Eric gave him all Fishless, and Reekfirth, and all Reekness, out on that side of the firth; but as to drifts there was nought set forth, for they were then so plentiful that every man had of them what he would. Now Onund set up a household at Coldback, and had many men about him; but when his goods began to grow great he had another stead in Reekfirth. Kolbein dwelt at Kolbein’s Creek. So Onund abode in peace for certain winters.

Chapter 10

Now Onund was so brisk a man, that few, even of whole men, could cope with him; and his name withal was well known throughout the land, because of his forefathers. After these things, befell that strife betwixt Ufeigh Grettir and Thorbiorn Earl’s-champion, which had such ending, that Ufeigh fell before Thorbiorn in Grettir’s-Gill, near Heel. There were many drawn together to the sons of Ufeigh concerning the blood-suit, and Onund Treefoot was sent for, and rode south in the spring, and guested at Hvamm, with Aud the Deeply-wealthy, and she gave him exceeding good welcome, because he had been with her west over the Sea. In those days, Olaf Feilan, her son’s son, was a man full grown, and Aud was by then worn with great eld; she bade Onund know that she would have Olaf, her kinsman, married, and was fain that he should woo Aldis of Barra, who was cousin to Asa, whom Onund had to

wife. Onund deemed the matter hopeful, and Olaf rode south with him. So when Onund met his friends and kin-in-law they bade him abide with them: then was the suit talked over, and was laid to Kialarnes Thing, for as then the Althing was not yet set up. So the case was settled by umpiredom, and heavy weregild came for the slayings, and Thorbiorn Earl’s-champion was outlawed. His son was Solmund, the father of Kari the Singed; father and son dwelt abroad a long time afterwards.

Thrand bade Onund and Olaf to his house, and so did Thormod Shaft, and they backed Olaf’s wooing, which was settled with ease, because men knew how mighty a woman Aud was. So the bargain was made, and, so much being done, Onund rode home, and Aud thanked him well for his help to Olaf. That autumn Olaf Feilan wedded Aldis of Barra; and then died Aud the Deeply-wealthy, as is told in the story of the Laxdale men.

Chapter 11

Onund and Asa had two sons; the elder was called Thorgeir, the younger Ufeigh Grettir; but Asa soon died. Thereafter Onund got to wife a woman called Thordis, the daughter of Thorgrim, from Gnup in Midfirth, and akin to Midfirth Skeggi. Of her Onund had a son called Thorgrim; he was early a big man, and a strong, wise, and good withal in matters of husbandry. Onund dwelt on at Coldback till he was old, then he died in his bed, and is buried in Treefoot’s barrow; he was the briskest and lithest of one-footed men who have ever lived in Iceland.

Now Thorgrim took the lead among the sons of Onund, though others of them were older than he; but when he was twenty-five years old he grew grey-haired, and therefore was he bynamed Greypate; Thordis, his mother, was afterwards wedded north in Willowdale, to Audun Skokul, and their son was Asgeir, of Asgeir’s-River. Thorgrim Greypate and his brothers had great possessions in common, nor did they divide the goods between them. Now Eric, who farmed at Arness, as is aforesaid, had to wife Alof, daughter of Ingolf, of Ingolfs-firth; and Flosi was the name of their son, a hopeful man, and of many friends. In those days three brothers came out hither, Ingolf, Ufeigh, and Eyvind, and settled those three firths that are known by their names, and there dwelt afterwards. Olaf was the name of Eyvind’s son, he first dwelt at Eyvind’s-firth, and after at Drangar, and was a man to hold his own well.

Now there was no strife betwixt these men while their elders were alive; but when Eric died, it seemed to Flosi, that those of Coldback had no lawful title to the lands which Eric had given to Onund; and from this befell much ill-blood betwixt them; but Thorgrim and his kin still held their lands as before, but they might not risk having sports together. Now Thorgeir was head-man of the household of those brothers in Reekfirth, and would ever be rowing out a-fishing, because in those days were the firths full of fish; so those in the Creek made up their plot; a man there was, a house-carle of Flosi in Arness, called Thorfin, him Flosi sent for Thorgeir’s head, and he went and hid himself in the boat-stand; that morning, Thorgeir got ready to row out to sea, and two men with him, one called Hamund, the other Brand. Thorgeir went first, and had on his back a leather bottle and drink therein. It was very dark, and as he walked down from the boat-stand Thorfin ran at him, and smote him with an axe betwixt the shoulders, and the axe sank in, and the bottle squeaked, but he let go the axe, for he deemed that there would be little need of binding up, and would save himself as swiftly as might be; and it is to be told of him that he ran off to Arness, and came there before broad day, and told of Thorgeir’s slaying, and said that he should have need of Flosi’s shelter, and that the only thing to be done was to offer atonement, "for that of all things," said he, "is like to better our strait, great as it has now grown."

Flosi said that he would first hear tidings; "and I am minded to think that thou art afraid after thy big deed."

Now it is to be said of Thorgeir, that he turned from the blow as the axe smote the bottle, nor had he any wound; they made no search for the man because of the dark, so they rowed over the firths to Coldback, and told tidings of what had happed; thereat folk made much mocking, and called Thorgeir, Bottleback, and that was his by-name ever after.

And this was sung withal

"The brave men of days of old,
Whereof many a tale is told,
Bathed the whiting of the shield,
In wounds' house on battle-field;
But the honour-missing fool,
Both sides of his slaying tool,
Since faint heart his hand made vain.
With but curdled milk must stain."

Chapter 12

In those days befell such hard times in Iceland, that nought like them has been known there; well-nigh all gettings from the sea, and all drifts, came to an end; and this went on for many seasons. One autumn certain chapmen in a big ship were drifted thither, and were wrecked there in the Creek, and Flosi took to him four or five of them; Stein was the name of their captain; they were housed here and there about the Creek, and were minded to build them a new ship from the wreck; but they were unhandy herein, and the ship was over small stem and stern, but over big amidships.

That spring befell a great storm from the north, which lasted near a week, and after the storm men looked after their drifts. Now there was a man called Thorstein, who dwelt at Reekness; he found a whale driven up on the firthward side of the ness, at a place called Rib-Skerries, and the whale was a big whale.

Thorstein sent forthwith a messenger to Wick to Flosi, and so to the nighest farm-steads. Now Einar was the name of the farmer at Combe, and he was a tenant of those of Coldback, and had the ward of their drifts on that side of the firths; and now withal he was ware of the stranding of the whale: and he took boat and rowed past the firths to Byrgis Creek, whence he sent a man to Coldback; and when Thorgrim and his brothers heard that, they got ready at their swiftest, and were twelve in a ten-oared boat, and Kolbein's sons fared with them, Ivar and Leif, and were six altogether; and all farmers who could bring it about went to the whale.

Now it is to be told of Flosi that he sent to his kin in Ingolfs-firth and Ufeigh's-firth, and for Olaf Eyvindson, who then dwelt at Drangar; and Flosi came first to the whale, with the men of Wick, then they fell to cutting up the whale, and what was cut was forthwith sent ashore; near twenty men were thereat at first, but soon folk came thronging thither.

Therewith came those of Coldback in four boats, and Thorgrim laid claim to the whale and forbade the men of Wick to shear, allot, or carry off aught thereof: Flosi bade him show if Eric had given Onund Treefoot the drift in clear terms, or else he said he should defend himself with arms. Thorgrim thought he and his too few, and would not risk an onset; but therewithal came a boat rowing up the firth, and the rowers therein pulled smartly. Soon they came up, and there was Swan, from Knoll in Biornfirth,

and his house-carles; and straightway, when he came, he bade Thorgrim not to let himself be robbed; and great friends they had been heretofore, and now Swan offered his aid. The brothers said they would take it, and therewith set on fiercely; Thorgeir Bottleback first mounted the whale against Flosi’s house-carles; there the aforenamed Thorfin was cutting the whale, he was in front nigh the head, and stood in a foot-hold he had cut for himself; then Thorgeir said, "Herewith I bring thee back thy axe," and smote him on the neck, and struck off his head.

Flosi was up on the foreshore when he saw that, and he egged on his men to meet them hardily; now they fought long together, but those of Coldback had the best of it: few men there had weapons except the axes wherewith they were cutting up the whale, and some choppers. So the men of Wick gave back to the foreshores; the Eastmen had weapons, and many a wound they gave; Stein, the captain, smote a foot off Ivar Kolbeinson, but Leif, Ivar’s brother, beat to death a fellow of Stein’s with a whale-rib; blows were dealt there with whatever could be caught at, and men fell on either side. But now came up Olaf and his men from Drangar in many boats, and gave help to Flosi, and then those of Coldback were borne back overpowered; but they had loaded their boats already, and Swan bade get aboard and thitherward they gave back, and the men of Wick came on after them; and when Swan was come down to the sea, he smote at Stein, the sea-captain, and gave him a great wound, and then leapt aboard his boat; Thorgrim wounded Flosi with a great wound and therewith got away; Olaf cut at Ufeigh Grettir, and wounded him to death; but Thorgeir caught Ufeigh up and leapt aboard with him. Now those of Coldback row east by the firths, and thus they parted; and this was sung of their meeting

At Rib-skerries, I hear folk tell,
A hard and dreadful fray befell,
For men unarmed upon that day
With strips of whale-fat made good play.
Fierce steel-gods these in turn did meet
With blubber-slices nowise sweet;
Certes a wretched thing it is
To tell of squabbles such as this.

After these things was peace settled between them, and these suits were laid to the Althing; there Thorod the Godi and Midfirth-Skeggi, with many of the south-country folk, aided those of Coldback; Flosi was outlawed, and many of those who had been with him; and his moneys were greatly drained because he chose to pay up all weregild himself. Thorgrim and his folk could not show that they had paid money for the lands and drifts which Flosi claimed. Thorkel Moon was lawman then, and he was bidden to give his decision; he said that to him it seemed law, that something had been paid for those lands, though mayhap not their full worth; "For so did Steinvor the Old to Ingolf, my grandfather, that she had from him all Rosmwhale-ness and gave therefor a spotted cloak, nor has that gift been voided, though certes greater flaws be therein: but here I lay down my rede," said he, "that the land be shared, and that both sides have equal part therein; and henceforth be it made law, that each man have the drifts before his own lands." Now this was done, and the land was so divided that Thorgrim and his folk had to give up Reekfirth and all the lands by the firth-side, but Combe they were to keep still. Ufeigh was atoned with a great sum; Thorfin was unatoned, and boot was given to Thorgeir for the attack on his life; and thereafter were they set at one together. Flosi took ship for Norway with Stein, the ship-master, and sold his lands in the Wick to Geirmund Hiuka-timber, who dwelt there afterwards. Now that ship which the chapmen had made was very broad of beam, so that men called it the Treetub, and by that name is the creek known: but in that keel did Flosi go out, but was driven back to Axefirth, whereof came the tale of Bodmod, and Grimulf, and Gerpir.

Chapter 13

Now after this the brothers Thorgrim and Thorgeir shared their possessions. Thorgrim took the chattels and Thorgeir the land; Thorgrim betook himself to Midfirth and bought land at Biarg by the counsel of Skeggi; he had to wife Thordis, daughter of Asmund of Asmund's-peak, who had settled the Thingere lands: Thorgrim and Thordis had a son who was called Asmund; he was a big man and a strong, wise withal, and the fairest-haired of men, but his head grew grey early, wherefore he was called Asmund the Greyhaired. Thorgrim grew to be a man very busy about his household, and kept all his well to their work. Asmund would do but little work, so the father and son had small fellowship together; and so things fared till Asmund had grown of age; then he asked his father for travelling money; Thorgrim said he should have little enough, but gave him somewhat of huckstering wares.

Then Asmund went abroad, and his goods soon grew great; he sailed to sundry lands, and became the greatest of merchants, and very rich; he was a man well beloved and trusty, and many kinsmen he had in Norway of great birth.

One autumn he guested east in the Wick with a great man who was called Thorstein; he was an Uplander of kin, and had a sister called Ranveig, one to be chosen before all women; her Asmund wooed, and gained her by the help of Thorstein her brother; and there Asmund dwelt a while and was held in good esteem: he had of Ranveig a son hight Thorstein, strong, and the fairest of men, and great of voice; a man tall of growth he was, but somewhat slow in his mien, and therefore was he called Dromund. Now when Thorstein was nigh grown up, his mother fell sick and died, and thereafter Asmund had no joy in Norway; the kin of Thorstein's mother took his goods, and him withal to foster; but Asmund betook himself once more to seafaring, and became a man of great renown. Now he brought his ship into Hunawater, and in those days was Thorkel Krafla chief over the Waterdale folk; and he heard of Asmund's coming out, and rode to the ship and bade Asmund to his house; and he dwelt at Marstead in Waterdale; so Asmund went to be guest there. This Thorkel was the son of Thorgrim the Godi of Cornriver, and was a very wise man.

Now this was after the coming out of Bishop Frederick, and Thorvald Kodran's son, and they dwelt at the Brooks-meet, when these things came to pass: they were the first to preach the law of Christ in the north country; Thorkel let himself be signed with the cross and many men with him, and things enow betid betwixt the bishop and the north-country folk which come not into this tale.

Now at Thorkel's was a woman brought up, Asdis by name, who was the daughter of Bard, the son of Jokul, the son of Ingimund the Old, the son of Thorstein, the son of Ketil the Huge: the mother of Asdis was Aldis the daughter of Ufeigh Grettir, as is aforesaid; Asdis was as yet unwedded, and was deemed the best match among women, both for her kin and her possessions; Asmund was grown weary of seafaring, and was fain to take up his abode in Iceland; so he took up the word, and wooed this woman. Thorkel knew well all his ways, that he was a rich man and of good counsel to hold his wealth; so that came about, that Asmund got Asdis to wife; he became a bosom friend of Thorkel, and a great dealer in matters of farming, cunning in the law, and far-reaching. And now a little after this Thorgrim Greypate died at Biarg, and Asmund took the heritage after him and dwelt there.

Chapter 14

Of Grettir as a child, and his froward ways with his father

Asmund the Greyhaired kept house at Biarg; great and proud was his household, and many men he had about him, and was a man much beloved. These were the children of him and Asdis. Atli was the eldest son; a man yielding and soft-natured, easy, and meek withal, and all men liked him well: another son they had called Grettir; he was very froward in his childhood; of few words, and rough; worrying both in word and deed. Little fondness he got from his father Asmund, but his mother loved him right well.

Grettir Asmundson was fair to look on, broad-faced, short-faced, red-haired, and much freckled; not of quick growth in his childhood.

Thordis was a daughter of Asmund, whom Glum, the son of Uspak, the son of Kiarlak of Skridinsenni, afterwards had to wife. Ranveig was another daughter of Asmund; she was the wife of Gamli, the son of Thorhal, the son of the Vendlander; they kept house at Meals in Ramfirth; their son was Grim. The son of Glum and Thordis, the daughter of Asmund, was Uspak, who quarrelled with Odd, the son of Ufeigh, as is told in the Bandamanna Saga.

Grettir grew up at Biarg till he was ten years old; then he began to get on a little; but Asmund bade him do some work; Grettir answered that work was not right meet for him, but asked what he should do.

Says Asmund, "Thou shalt watch my home-geese."

Grettir answered and said, "A mean work, a milksop’s work."

Asmund said, "Turn it well out of hand, and then matters shall get better between us."

Then Grettir betook himself to watching the home-geese; fifty of them there were, with many goslings; but no long time went by before he found them a troublesome drove, and the goslings slow-paced withal. Thereat he got sore worried, for little did he keep his temper in hand. So some time after this, wayfaring men found the goslings strewn about dead, and the home-geese broken-winged; and this was in autumn. Asmund was mightily vexed hereat, and asked if Grettir had killed the fowl: he sneered mockingly, and answered

"Surely as winter comes, shall I
Twist the goslings’ necks awry.
If in like case are the geese,
I have finished each of these."

"Thou shalt kill them no more," said Asmund.

"Well, a friend should warn a friend of ill," said Grettir.

"Another work shall be found for thee then," said Asmund.

"More one knows the more one tries," said Grettir; "and what shall I do now?"

Asmund answered, "Thou shalt rub my back at the fire, as I have been wont to have it done."

"Hot for the hand, truly," said Grettir; "but still a milksop’s work."

Now Grettir went on with this work for a while; but autumn came on, and Asmund became very fain of heat, and he spurs Grettir on to rub his back briskly. Now, in those times there were wont to be large fire-halls at the homesteads, wherein men sat at long fires in the evenings; boards were set before the men there, and afterwards folk slept out sideways from the fires; there also women worked at the wool in the daytime. Now, one evening, when Grettir had to rub Asmund’s back, the old carle said,

"Now thou wilt have to put away thy sloth, thou milk-sop."

Says Grettir, "Ill is it to goad the foolhardy."

Asmund answers, "Thou wilt ever be a good-for-nought."

Now Grettir sees where, in one of the seats stood wool-combs: one of these he caught up, and let it go all down Asmund’s back. He sprang up, and was mad wroth thereat; and was going to smite Grettir with his staff, but he ran off. Then came the housewife, and asked what was this to-do betwixt them. Then Grettir answered by this ditty

"This jewel-strewer, O ground of gold,
(His counsels I deem over bold),
On both these hands that trouble sow,
(Ah bitter pain) will burn me now;

Therefore with wool-comb’s nails unshorn
Somewhat ring-strewer’s back is torn:
The hook-clawed bird that wrought his wound,
Lo, now I see it on the ground."

Hereupon was his mother sore vexed, that he should have taken to a trick like this; she said he would never fail to be the most reckless of men. All this nowise bettered matters between Asmund and Grettir.

Now, some time after this, Asmund had a talk with Grettir, that he should watch his horses. Grettir said this was more to his mind than the back-rubbing.

"Then shalt thou do as I bid thee," said Asmund. "I have a dun mare, which I call Keingala; she is so wise as to shifts of weather, thaws, and the like, that rough weather will never fail to follow, when she will not go out on grazing. At such times thou shalt lock the horses up under cover; but keep them to grazing on the mountain neck yonder, when winter comes on. Now I shall deem it needful that thou turn this work out of hand better than the two I have set thee to already."

Grettir answered, "This is a cold work and a manly, but I deem it ill to trust in the mare, for I know none who has done it yet."

Now Grettir took to the horse-watching, and so the time went on till past Yule-time; then came on much cold weather with snow, that made grazing hard to come at. Now Grettir was ill clad, and as yet little hardened, and he began to be starved by the cold; but Keingala grazed away in the windiest place she could find, let the weather be as rough as it would. Early as she might go to the pasture, never would she go back to stable before nightfall. Now Grettir deemed that he must think of some scurvy trick or other, that Keingala might be paid in full for her way of grazing: so, one morning early, he comes to the horse-stable, opens it, and finds Keingala standing all along before the crib; for, whatever

food was given to the horses with her, it was her way to get it all to herself. Grettir got on her back, and had a sharp knife in his hand, and drew it right across Keingala’s shoulder, and then all along both sides of the back. Thereat the mare, being both fat and shy, gave a mad bound, and kicked so fiercely, that her hooves clattered against the wall. Grettir fell off; but, getting on his legs, strove to mount her again. Now their struggle is of the sharpest, but the end of it is, that he flays off the whole of the strip along the back to the loins. Thereafter he drove the horses out on grazing; Keingala would bite but at her back, and when noon was barely past, she started off, and ran back to the house. Grettir now locks the stable and goes home. Asmund asked Grettir where the horses were. He said that he had stabled them as he was wont. Asmund said that rough weather was like to be at hand, as the horses would not keep at their grazing in such good weather as now it was.

Grettir said, "Oft fail in wisdom folk of better trust."

Now the night goes by, but no rough weather came on. Grettir drove off the horses, but Keingala cannot bear the grazing. This seemed strange to Asmund, as the weather changed in nowise from what it had been theretofore. The third morning Asmund went to the horses, and, coming to Keingala, said,

"I must needs deem these horses to be in sorry case, good as the winter has been, but thy sides will scarce lack flesh, my dun."

"Things boded will happen," said Grettir, "but so will things unboded."

Asmund stroked the back of the mare, and, lo, the hide came off beneath his hand; he wondered how this could have happened, and said it was likely to be Grettir’s doing. Grettir sneered mockingly, but said nought. Now goodman Asmund went home talking as one mad; he went straight to the fire-hall, and as he came heard the good wife say, "It were good indeed if the horse-keeping of my kinsman had gone off well."

Then Asmund sang this stave

"Grettir has in such wise played,
That Keingala has he flayed,
Whose trustiness would be my boast
(Proudest women talk the most);
So the cunning lad has wrought,
Thinking thereby to do nought
Of my biddings any more.
In thy mind turn these words o’er."

The housewife answered, "I know not which is least to my mind, that thou shouldst ever be bidding him work, or that he should turn out all his work in one wise."

"That too we will make an end of," said Asmund, "but he shall fare the worse therefor."

Then Grettir said, "Well, let neither make words about it to the other."

So things went on awhile, and Asmund had Keingala killed; and many other scurvy tricks did Grettir in his childhood whereof the story says nought. But he grew great of body, though his strength was not well known, for he was unskilled in wrestling; he would make ditties and rhymes, but was somewhat scurrilous therein. He had no will to lie anight in the fire-hall and was mostly of few words.

Chapter 15

Of the ball-play on Midfirth Water

At this time there were many growing up to be men in Midfirth; Skald-Torfa dwelt at Torfa’s-stead in those days; her son was called Bessi, he was the shapeliest of men and a good skald.

At Meal lived two brothers, Kormak and Thorgils, with them a man called Odd was fostered, and was called the Foundling-skald.

One called Audun was growing up at Audunstead in Willowdale, he was a kind and good man to deal with, and the strongest in those north parts, of all who were of an age with him. Kalf Asgeirson dwelt at Asgeir’s-river, and his brother Thorvald with him. Atli also, Grettir’s brother, was growing into a ripe man at that time; the gentlest of men he was, and well beloved of all. Now these men settled to have ball-play together on Midfirth Water; thither came the Midfirthers, and Willowdale men, and men from Westhope, and Waterness, and Ramfirth, but those who came from far abode at the play-stead.

Now those who were most even in strength were paired together, and thereat was always the greatest sport in autumn-tide. But when he was fourteen years old Grettir went to the plays, because he was prayed thereto by his brother Atli.

Now were all paired off for the plays, and Grettir was allotted to play against Audun, the aforenamed, who was some winters the eldest of the two; Audun struck the ball over Grettir’s head, so that he could not catch it, and it bounded far away along the ice; Grettir got angry thereat, deeming that Audun would outplay him; but he fetches the ball and brings it back, and, when he was within reach of Audun, hurls it right against his forehead, and smites him so that the skin was broken; then Audun struck at Grettir with the bat he held in his hand, but smote him no hard blow, for Grettir ran in under the stroke; and thereat they seized one another with arms clasped, and wrestled. Then all saw that Grettir was stronger than he had been taken to be, for Audun was a man full of strength.

A long tug they had of it, but the end was that Grettir fell, and Audun thrust his knees against his belly and breast, and dealt hardly with him.

Then Atli and Bessi and many others ran up and parted them; but Grettir said there was no need to hold him like a mad dog, "For," said he, "thralls wreak themselves at once, dastards never."

This men suffered not to grow into open strife, for the brothers, Kalf and Thorvald, were fain that all should be at one again, and Audun and Grettir were somewhat akin withal; so the play went on as before, nor did anything else befall to bring about strife.

Chapter 16

Of the slaying of Skeggi

Now Thorkel Krafla got very old; he had the rule of Waterdale and was a great man. He was bosom friend of Asmund the Greyhaired, as was beseeming for the sake of their kinship; he was wont to ride to Biarg every year and see his kin there, nor did he fail herein the spring following these matters just told. Asmund and Asdis welcomed him most heartily, he was there three nights, and many things did the kinsmen speak of between them. Now Thorkel asked Asmund what his mind foreboded him about

his sons, as to what kind of craft they would be likely to take to. Asmund said that he thought Atli would be a great man at farming, foreseeing, and money-making. Thorkel answered, "A useful man and like unto thyself: but what dost thou say of Grettir?"

Asmund said, "Of him I say, that he will be a strong man and an unruly, and, certes, of wrathful mood, and heavy enough he has been to me."

Thorkel answered, "That bodes no good, friend; but how shall we settle about our riding to the Thing next summer?"

Asmund answered, "I am growing heavy for wayfaring, and would fain sit at home."

"Wouldst thou that Atli go in thy stead?" said Thorkel.

"I do not see how I could spare him," says Asmund, "because of the farm-work and ingathering of household stores; but now Grettir will not work, yet he bears about that wit with him that I deem he will know how to keep up the showing forth of the law for me through thy aid."

"Well, thou shall have thy will," said Thorkel, and withal he rode home when he was ready, and Asmund let him go with good gifts.

Some time after this Thorkel made him ready to ride to the Thing, he rode with sixty men, for all went with him who were in his rule: thus he came to Biarg, and therefrom rode Grettir with him.

Now they rode south over the heath that is called Two-days'-ride; but on this mountain the baiting grounds were poor, therefore they rode fast across it down to the settled lands, and when they came down to Fleet-tongue they thought it was time to sleep, so they took the bridles off their horses and let them graze with the saddles on. They lay sleeping till far on in the day, and when they woke, the men went about looking for their horses; but they had gone each his own way, and some of them had been rolling; but Grettir was the last to find his horse.

Now it was the wont in those days that men should carry their own victuals when they rode to the Althing, and most bore meal-bags athwart their saddles; and the saddle was turned under the belly of Grettir's horse, and the meal-bag was gone, so he goes and searches, and finds nought.

Just then he sees a man running fast, Grettir asks who it is who is running there; the man answered that his name was Skeggi, and that he was a house-carle from the Ridge in Waterdale. "I am one of the following of goodman Thorkel," he says, "but, faring heedlessly, I have lost my meal-bag."

Grettir said, "Odd haps are worst haps, for I, also, have lost the meal-sack which I owned, and now let us search both together."

This Skeggi liked well, and a while they go thus together; but all of a sudden Skeggi bounded off up along the moors and caught up a meal-sack. Grettir saw him stoop, and asked what he took up there.

"My meal-sack," says Skeggi.

"Who speaks to that besides thyself?" says Grettir; "let me see it, for many a thing has its like."

Skeggi said that no man should take from him what was his own; but Grettir caught at the meal-bag, and now they tug one another along with the meal-sack between them, both trying hard to get the best of it.

"It is to be wondered at," says the house-carle, "that ye Waterdale men should deem, that because other men are not as wealthy as ye, that they should not therefore dare to hold aught of their own in your despite."

Grettir said, that it had nought to do with the worth of men that each should have his own.

Skeggi answers, "Too far off is Audun now to throttle thee as at that ball-play."

"Good," said Grettir; "but, howsoever that went, thou at least shall never throttle me."

Then Skeggi got at his axe and hewed at Grettir; when Grettir saw that, he caught the axe-handle with the left hand bladeward of Skeggi's hand, so hard that straightway was the axe loosed from his hold. Then Grettir drave that same axe into his head so that it stood in the brain, and the house-carle fell dead to earth. Then Grettir seized the meal-bag and threw it across his saddle, and thereon rode after his fellows.

Now Thorkel rode ahead of all, for he had no misgiving of such things befalling: but men missed Skeggi from the company, and when Grettir came up they asked him what he knew of Skeggi; then he sang

"A rock-troll her weight did throw
At Skeggi's throat a while ago:
Over the battle ogress ran
The red blood of the serving-man;
Her deadly iron mouth did gape
Above him, till clean out of shape
She tore his head and let out life:
And certainly I saw their strife."

Then Thorkel's men sprung up and said that surely trolls had not taken the man in broad daylight. Thorkel grew silent, but said presently, "The matter is likely to be quite other than this; methinks Grettir has in all likelihood killed him, or what could befall?"

Then Grettir told all their strife. Thorkel says, "This has come to pass most unluckily, for Skeggi was given to my following, and was, nathless, a man of good kin; but I shall deal thus with the matter: I shall give boot for the man as the doom goes, but the outlawry I may not settle. Now, two things thou hast to choose between, Grettir; whether thou wilt rather go to the Thing and risk the turn of matters, or go back home."

Grettir chose to go to the Thing, and thither he went. But a lawsuit was set on foot by the heirs of the slain man: Thorkel gave handsel, and paid up all fines, but Grettir must needs be outlawed, and keep abroad three winters.

Now when the chiefs rode from the Thing, they baited under Sledgehill before they parted: then Grettir lifted a stone which now lies there in the grass and is called Grettir's-heave; but many men came up to see the stone, and found it a great wonder that so young a man should heave aloft such a huge rock.

Now Grettir rode home to Biarg and tells the tale of his journey; Asmund let out little thereon, but said that he would turn out an unruly man.

Chapter 17

Of Grettir’s voyage out

There was a man called Haflidi, who dwelt at Reydarfell in Whiteriverside, he was a seafaring man and had a sailing ship, which lay up Whiteriver: there was a man on board his ship, hight Bard, who had a wife with him young and fair. Asmund sent a man to Haflidi, praying him to take Grettir and look after him; Haflidi said that he had heard that the man was ill ruled of mood; yet for the sake of the friendship between him and Asmund he took Grettir to himself, and made ready for sailing abroad.

Asmund would give to his son no faring-goods but victuals for the voyage and a little wadmall. Grettir prayed him for some weapon, but Asmund answered, "Thou hast not been obedient to me, nor do I know how far thou art likely to work with weapons things that may be of any gain; and no weapon shalt thou have of me."

"No deed no reward," says Grettir. Then father and son parted with little love. Many there were who bade Grettir farewell, but few bade him come back.

But his mother brought him on his road, and before they parted she spoke thus, "Thou art not fitted out from home, son, as I fain would thou wert, a man so well born as thou; but, meseems, the greatest shortcoming herein is that thou hast no weapons of any avail, and my mind misgives me that thou wilt perchance need them sorely."

With that she took out from under her cloak a sword well wrought, and a fair thing it was, and then she said, "This sword was owned by Jokul, my father’s father, and the earlier Waterdale men, and it gained them many a day; now I give thee the sword, and may it stand thee in good stead."

Grettir thanked her well for this gift, and said he deemed it better than things of more worth; then he went on his way, and Asdis wished him all good hap.

Now Grettir rode south over the heath, and made no stay till he came to the ship. Haflidi gave him a good welcome and asked him for his faring-goods, then Grettir sang

"Rider of wind-driven steed,
Little gat I to my need,
When I left my fair birth-stead,
From the snatchers of worm’s bed;
But this man’s-bane hanging here,
Gift of woman good of cheer,
Proves the old saw said not ill,
Best to bairn is mother still."

Haflidi said it was easily seen that she thought the most of him. But now they put to sea when they were ready, and had wind at will; but when they had got out over all shallows they hoisted sail.

Now Grettir made a den for himself under the boat, from whence he would move for nought, neither for baling, nor to do aught at the sail, nor to work at what he was bound to work at in the ship in even shares with the other men, neither would he buy himself off from the work.

Now they sailed south by Reekness and then south from the land; and when they lost land they got much heavy sea; the ship was somewhat leaky, and scarce seaworthy in heavy weather, therefore they had it wet enough. Now Grettir let fly his biting rhymes, whereat the men got sore wroth. One day, when it so happened that the weather was both squally and cold, the men called out to Grettir, and bade him now do manfully, "For," said they, "now our claws grow right cold." Grettir looked up and said

"Good luck, scurvy starvelings, if I should behold
Each finger ye have doubled up with the cold."

And no work they got out of him, and now it misliked them of their lot as much again as before, and they said that he should pay with his skin for his rhymes and the lawlessness which he did. "Thou art more fain," said they, "of playing with Bard the mate's wife than doing thy duty on board ship, and this is a thing not to be borne at all."

The gale grew greater steadily, and now they stood baling for days and nights together, and all swore to kill Grettir. But when Haflidi heard this, he went up to where Grettir lay, and said, "Methinks the bargain between thee and the chapmen is scarcely fair; first thou dost by them unlawfully, and thereafter thou castest thy rhymes at them; and now they swear that they will throw thee overboard, and this is unseemly work to go on."

"Why should they not be free to do as they will?" says Grettir; "but I well would that one or two of them tarry here behind with me, or ever I go overboard."

Haflidi says, "Such deeds are not to be done, and we shall never thrive if ye rush into such madness; but I shall give thee good rede."

"What is that?" says Grettir.

"They blame thee for singing ill things of them; now, therefore, I would that thou sing some scurvy rhyme to me, for then it might be that they would bear with thee the easier."

"To thee I never sing but good," says Grettir: "I am not going to make thee like these starvelings."

"One may sing so," says Haflidi, "that the lampoon be not so foul when it is searched into, though at first sight it be not over fair."

"I have ever plenty of that skill in me," says Grettir.

Then Haflidi went to the men where they were baling, and said, "Great is your toil, and no wonder that ye have taken ill liking to Grettir."

"But his lampoons we deem worse than all the rest together," they said.

Haflidi said in a loud voice, "He will surely fare ill for it in the end."

But when Grettir heard Haflidi speak blamefully of him, he sang

"Otherwise would matters be,
When this shouting Haflidi
Ate in house at Reydarfell
Curdled milk, and deemed it well;
He who decks the reindeer's side

That ’twixt ness and ness doth glide,
Twice in one day had his fill
Of the feast of dart shower shrill."

The shipmen thought this foul enough, and said he should not put shame on Skipper Haflidi for nought.

Then said Haflidi, "Grettir is plentifully worthy that ye should do him some shame, but I will not have my honour staked against his ill-will and recklessness; nor is it good for us to wreak vengeance for this forthwith while we have this danger hanging over us; but be ye mindful of it when ye land, if so it seem good to you."

"Well," they said, "why should we not fare even as thou farest? for why should his vile word bite us more than thee?"

And in that mind Haflidi bade them abide; and thence-forward the chapmen made far less noise about Grettir’s rhymes than before.

Now a long and a hard voyage they had, and the leak gained on the ship, and men began to be exceeding worn with toil. The young wife of the mate was wont to sew from Grettir’s hands, and much would the crew mock him therefor; but Haflidi went up to where Grettir lay and sang

"Grettir, stand up from thy grave,
In the trough of the grey wave
The keel labours, tell my say
Now unto thy merry may;
From thy hands the linen-clad
Fill of sewing now has had,
Till we make the land will she
Deem that labour fitteth thee."

Then Grettir stood up and sang

"Stand we up, for neath us now
Rides the black ship high enow;
This fair wife will like it ill
If my limbs are laid here still;
Certes, the white trothful one
Will not deem the deed well done,
If the work that I should share
Other folk must ever bear."

Then he ran aft to where they were baling, and asked what they would he should do; they said he would do mighty little good.

"Well," said he, "ye may yet be apaid of a man’s aid."

Haflidi bade them not set aside his help, "For it may be he shall deem his hands freed if he offers his aid."

At that time pumping was not used in ships that fared over the main; the manner of baling they used men called tub or cask baling, and a wet work it was and a wearisome; two balers were used, and one went down while the other came up. Now the chapmen bade Grettir have the job of sinking the balers, and said that now it should be tried what he could do; he said that the less it was tried the better it would be. But he goes down and sinks the balers, and now two were got to bale against him; they held out but a little while before they were overcome with weariness, and then four came forward and soon fared in likewise, and, so say some, that eight baled against him before the baling was done and the ship was made dry. Thenceforth the manner of the chapmen’s words to Grettir was much changed, for they saw what strength he had to fall back upon; and from that time he was the stoutest and readiest to help, wheresoever need was.

Now they bore off east into the main, and much thick weather they had, and one night unawares they ran suddenly on a rock, so that the nether part of the ship went from under her; then the boat was run down, and women and all the loose goods were brought off: nearby was a little holm whither they brought their matters as they best could in the night; but when it began to dawn they had a talk as to where they were come; then they who had fared between lands before knew the land for Southmere in Norway; there was an island hardby called Haramsey; many folk dwelt there, and therein too was the manor of a lord.

Chapter 18

Of Grettir at Haramsey and his dealings with Karr the Old

Now the lord who dwelt in the island was called Thorfinn; he was the son of Karr the Old, who had dwelt there long; and Thorfinn was a great chief.

But when day was fully come men saw from the island that the chapmen were brought to great straits. This was made known to Thorfinn, and he quickly bestirred himself, and had a large bark of his launched, rowed by sixteen men, on this bark were nigh thirty men in all; they came up speedily and saved the chapmen’s wares; but the ship settled down, and much goods were lost there. Thorfinn brought all men from the ship home to himself, and they abode there a week and dried their wares. Then the chapmen went south into the land, and are now out of the tale.

Grettir was left behind with Thorfinn, and little he stirred, and was at most times mighty short of speech. Thorfinn bade give him meals, but otherwise paid small heed to him; Grettir was loth to follow him, and would not go out with him in the day; this Thorfinn took ill, but had not the heart to have food withheld from him.

Now Thorfinn was fond of stately house-keeping, and was a man of great joyance, and would fain have other men merry too: but Grettir would walk about from house to house, and often went into other farms about the island.

There was a man called Audun who dwelt at Windham; thither Grettir went every day, and he made friends with Audun, and there he was wont to sit till far on in the day. Now one night very late, as Grettir made ready to go home, he saw a great fire burst out on a ness to the north of Audun’s farm. Grettir asked what new thing this might be. Audun said that he need be in no haste to know that.

"It would be said," quoth Grettir, "if that were seen in our land, that the flame burned above hid treasure."

The farmer said, "That fire I deem to be ruled over by one into whose matters it avails little to pry."

"Yet fain would I know thereof," said Grettir.

"On that ness," said Audun, "stands a barrow, great and strong, wherein was laid Karr the Old, Thorfinn’s father; at first father and son had but one farm in the island; but since Karr died he has so haunted this place that he has swept away all farmers who owned lands here, so that now Thorfinn holds the whole island; but whatsoever man Thorfinn holds his hand over, gets no scathe."

Grettir said that he had told his tale well: "And," says he, "I shall come here to-morrow, and then thou shalt have digging-tools ready."

"Now, I pray thee," says Audun, "to do nought herein, for I know that Thorfinn will cast his hatred on thee therefor."

Grettir said he would risk that.

So the night went by, and Grettir came early on the morrow and the digging-tools were ready; the farmer goes with him to the barrow, and Grettir brake it open, and was rough-handed enough thereat, and did not leave off till he came to the rafters, and by then the day was spent; then he tore away the rafters, and now Audun prayed him hard not to go into the barrow; Grettir bade him guard the rope, "but I shall espy what dwells within here."

Then Grettir entered into the barrow, and right dark it was, and a smell there was therein none of the sweetest. Now he groped about to see how things were below; first he found horse-bones, and then he stumbled against the arm of a high-chair, and in that chair found a man sitting; great treasures of gold and silver were heaped together there, and a small chest was set under the feet of him full of silver; all these riches Grettir carried together to the rope; but as he went out through the barrow he was griped at right strongly; thereon he let go the treasure and rushed against the barrow-dweller, and now they set on one another unsparingly enough.

Everything in their way was kicked out of place, the barrow-wight setting on with hideous eagerness; Grettir gave back before him for a long time, till at last it came to this, that he saw it would not do to hoard his strength any more; now neither spared the other, and they were brought to where the horse-bones were, and thereabout they wrestled long. And now one, now the other, fell on his knee; but the end of the strife was, that the barrow-dweller fell over on his back with huge din. Then ran Audun from the holding of the rope, and deemed Grettir dead. But Grettir drew the sword, ’Jokul’s gift,’ and drave it at the neck of the barrow-bider so that it took off his head, and Grettir laid it at the thigh of him. Then he went to the rope with the treasure, and lo, Audun was clean gone, so he had to get up the rope by his hands; he had tied a line to the treasure, and therewith he now haled it up.

Grettir had got very stiff with his dealings with Karr, and now he went back to Thorfinn’s house with the treasures, whenas all folk had set them down to table. Thorfinn gave Grettir a sharp look when he came into the drinking-hall, and asked him what work he had on hand so needful to do that he might not keep times of meals with other men. Grettir answers, "Many little matters will hap on late eves," and therewith he cast down on the table all the treasure he had taken in the barrow; but one matter there was thereof, on which he must needs keep his eyes; this was a short-sword, so good a weapon, that a better, he said, he had never seen; and this he gave up the last of all. Thorfinn was blithe to see that sword, for it was an heirloom of his house, and had never yet gone out of his kin.

"Whence came these treasures to thine hand?" said Thorfinn.

Grettir sang

"Lessener of the flame of sea,
My strong hope was true to me,
When I deemed that treasure lay
In the barrow; from to-day
Folk shall know that I was right;
The begetters of the fight
Small joy now shall have therein,
Seeking dragon's-lair to win."

Thorfinn answered, "Blood will seldom seem blood to thine eyes; no man before thee has had will to break open the barrow; but, because I know that what wealth soever is hid in earth or borne into barrow is wrongly placed, I shall not hold thee blameworthy for thy deed as thou hast brought it all to me; yea, or whence didst thou get the good sword?"

Grettir answered and sang

"Lessener of waves flashing flame,
To my lucky hand this came

In the barrow where that thing
Through the dark fell clattering;
If that helm-fire I should gain,
Made so fair to be the bane
Of the breakers of the bow,
Ne'er from my hand should it go."

Thorfinn said, "Well hast thou prayed for it, but thou must show some deed of fame before I give thee that sword, for never could I get it of my father while he lived."

Said Grettir, "Who knows to whom most gain will come of it in the end?"

So Thorfinn took the treasures and kept the sword at his bed-head, and the winter wore on toward Yule, so that little else fell out to be told of.

Chapter 19

Of Yule at Haramsey, and how Grettir dealt with the Bearserks.

Now the summer before these things Earl Eric Hakonson made ready to go from his land west to England, to see King Knut the Mighty, his brother-in-law, but left behind him in the rule of Norway Hakon, his son, and gave him into the hands of Earl Svein, his brother, for the watching and warding of his realm, for Hakon was a child in years.

But before Earl Eric went away from the land, he called together lords and rich bonders, and many things they spoke on laws and the rule of the land, for Earl Eric was a man good at rule. Now men thought it an exceeding ill fashion in the land that runagates or bearserks called to holm high-born men for their fee or womankind, in such wise, that whosoever should fall before the other should lie

unatoned; hereof many got both shame and loss of goods, and some lost their lives withal; and therefore Earl Eric did away with all holm-gangs and outlawed all bearserks who fared with raids and riots.

In the making of this law, the chief of all, with Earl Eric, was Thorfinn Karrson, from Haramsey, for he was a wise man, and a dear friend of the Earls.

Two brothers are named as being of the worst in these matters, one hight Thorir Paunch, the other Ogmund the Evil; they were of Halogaland kin, bigger and stronger than other men. They wrought the bearserks'-gang and spared nothing in their fury; they would take away the wives of men and hold them for a week or a half-month, and then bring them back to their husbands; they robbed wheresoever they came, or did some other ill deeds. Now Earl Eric made them outlaws through the length and breadth of Norway, and Thorfinn was the eagerest of men in bringing about their outlawry, therefore they deemed that they owed him ill-will enow.

So the Earl went away from the land, as is said in his Saga; but Earl Svein bore sway over Norway. Thorfinn went home to his house, and sat at home till just up to Yule, as is aforesaid; but at Yule he made ready to go to his farm called Slysfirth, which is on the mainland, and thither he had bidden many of his friends. Thorfinn's wife could not go with her husband, for her daughter of ripe years lay ill a-bed, so they both abode at home. Grettir was at home too, and eight house-carles. Now Thorfinn went with thirty freedmen to the Yule-feast, whereat there was the greatest mirth and joyance among men.

Now Yule-eve comes on, and the weather was bright and calm; Grettir was mostly abroad this day, and saw how ships fared north and south along the land, for each one sought the other's home where the Yule drinking was settled to come off. By this time the goodman's daughter was so much better that she could walk about with her mother, and thus the day wore on.

Now Grettir sees how a ship rows up toward the island; it was not right big, but shield-hung it was from stem to stern, and stained all above the sea: these folk rowed smartly, and made for the boat-stands of goodman Thorfinn, and when the keel took land, those who were therein sprang overboard. Grettir cast up the number of the men, and they were twelve altogether; he deemed their guise to be far from peaceful. They took up their ship and bore it up from the sea; thereafter they ran up to the boat-stand, and therein was that big boat of Thorfinn, which was never launched to sea by less than thirty men, but these twelve shot it in one haul down to the shingle of the foreshore; and thereon they took up their own bark and bore it into the boat-stand.

Now Grettir thought that he could see clear enough that they would make themselves at home. But he goes down to meet them, and welcomes them merrily, and asks who they were and what their leader was hight; he to whom these words were spoken answered quickly, and said that his name was Thorir, and that he was called Paunch, and that his brother was Ogmund, and that the others were fellows of theirs.

"I deem," said Thorir, "that thy master Thorfinn has heard tell of us; is he perchance at home?"

Grettir answered, "Lucky men are ye, and hither have come in a good hour, if ye are the men I take you to be; the goodman is gone away with all his home-folk who are freemen, and will not be home again till after Yule; but the mistress is at home, and so is the goodman's daughter; and if I thought that I had some ill-will to pay back, I should have chosen above all things to have come just thus; for here are all matters in plenty whereof ye stand in need both beer, and all other good things."

Thorir held his peace, while Grettir let this tale run on, then he said to Ogmund

"How far have things come to pass other than as I guessed? and now am I well enough minded to take revenge on Thorfinn for having made us outlaws; and this man is ready enough of tidings, and no need have we to drag the words out of him."

"Words all may use freely," said Grettir, "and I shall give you such cheer as I may; and now come home with me."

They bade him have thanks therefor, and said they would take his offer.

But when they came home to the farm, Grettir took Thorir by the hand and led him into the hall; and now was Grettir mightily full of words. The mistress was in the hall, and had had it decked with hangings, and made all fair and seemly; but when she heard Grettir’s talk, she stood still on the floor, and asked whom he welcomed in that earnest wise.

He answered, "Now, mistress, is it right meet to welcome these guests merrily, for here is come goodman Thorir Paunch and the whole twelve of them, and are minded to sit here Yule over, and a right good hap it is, for we were few enough before."

She answered, "Am I to number these among bonders and goodmen, who are the worst of robbers and ill-doers? a large share of my goods had I given that they had not come here as at this time; and ill dost thou reward Thorfinn, for that he took thee a needy man from shipwreck and has held thee through the winter as a free man."

Grettir said, "It would be better to take the wet clothes off these guests than to scold at me; since for that thou mayst have time long enough."

Then said Thorir, "Be not cross-grained, mistress; nought shall thou miss thy husband’s being away, for a man shall be got in his place for thee, yea, and for thy daughter a man, and for each of the home-women."

"That is spoken like a man," said Grettir, "nor will they thus have any cause to bewail their lot."

Now all the women rushed forth from the hall smitten with huge dread and weeping; then said Grettir to the bearserks, "Give into my hands what it pleases you to lay aside of weapons and wet clothes, for the folk will not be yielding to us while they are scared."

Thorir said he heeded not how women might squeal; "But," said he, "thee indeed we may set apart from the other home-folk, and methinks we may well make thee our man of trust."

"See to that yourselves," said Grettir, "but certes I do not take to all men alike."

Thereupon they laid aside the more part of their weapons, and thereafter Grettir said

"Methinks it is a good rede now that ye sit down to table and drink somewhat, for it is right likely that ye are thirsty after the rowing."

They said they were ready enough for that, but knew not where to find out the cellar; Grettir asked if they would that he should see for things and go about for them. The bearserks said they would be right fain of that; so Grettir fetched beer and gave them to drink; they were mightily weary, and drank in huge draughts, and still he let them have the strongest beer that there was, and this went on for a long time, and meanwhile he told them many merry tales. From all this there was din enough to be heard

among them, and the home-folk were nowise fain to come to them.

Now Thorir said, "Never yet did I meet a man unknown to me, who would do us such good deeds as this man; now, what reward wilt thou take of us for thy work?"

Grettir answered, "As yet I look to no reward for this; but if we be even such friends when ye go away, as it looks like we shall be, I am minded to join fellowship with you; and though I be of less might than some of you, yet shall I not let any man of big redes."

Hereat they were well pleased, and would settle the fellowship with vows.

Grettir said that this they should not do, "For true is the old saw, Ale is another man, nor shall ye settle this in haste any further than as I have said, for on both sides are we men little meet to rule our tempers."

They said that they would not undo what they had said.

Withal the evening wore on till it grew quite dark; then sees Grettir that they were getting very heavy with drink, so he said

"Do ye not find it time to go to sleep?"

Thorir said, "Time enough forsooth, and sure shall I be to keep to what I have promised the mistress."

Then Grettir went forth from the hall, and cried out loudly

"Go ye to your beds, women all, for so is goodman Thorir pleased to bid."

They cursed him for this, and to hear them was like hearkening to the noise of many wolves. Now the bearserks came forth from the hall, and Grettir said

"Let us go out, and I will show you Thorfinn's cloth bower."

They were willing to be led there; so they came to an out-bower exceeding great; a door there was to it, and a strong lock thereon, and the storehouse was very strong withal; there too was a closet good and great, and a shield panelling between the chambers; both chambers stood high, and men went up by steps to them. Now the bearserks got riotous and pushed Grettir about, and he kept tumbling away from them, and when they least thought thereof, he slipped quickly out of the bower, seized the latch, slammed the door to, and put the bolt on. Thorir and his fellows thought at first that the door must have got locked of itself, and paid no heed thereto; they had light with them, for Grettir had showed them many choice things which Thorfinn owned, and these they now noted awhile. Meantime Grettir made all speed home to the farm, and when he came in at the door he called out loudly, and asked where the goodwife was; she held her peace, for she did not dare to answer.

He said, "Here is somewhat of a chance of a good catch; but are there any weapons of avail here?"

She answers, "Weapons there are, but how they may avail thee I know not."

"Let us talk thereof anon," says he, "but now let every man do his best, for later on no better chance shall there be."

The good wife said, "Now God were in garth if our lot might better: over Thorfinn’s bed hangs the barbed spear, the big one that was owned by Karr the Old; there, too, is a helmet and a byrni, and the short-sword, the good one; and the arms will not fail if thine heart does well."

Grettir seizes the helmet and spear, girds himself with the short-sword, and rushed out swiftly; and the mistress called upon the house-carles, bidding them follow such a dauntless man, four of them rushed forth and seized their weapons, but the other four durst come nowhere nigh. Now it is to be said of the bearserks that they thought Grettir delayed his coming back strangely; and now they began to doubt if there were not some guile in the matter. They rushed against the door and found it was locked, and now they try the timber walls so that every beam creaked again; at last they brought things so far that they broke down the shield-panelling, got into the passage, and thence out to the steps. Now bearserks’-gang seized them, and they howled like dogs. In that very nick of time Grettir came up and with both hands thrust his spear at the midst of Thorir, as he was about to get down the steps, so that it went through him at once. Now the spear-head was both long and broad, and Ogmund the Evil ran on to Thorir and pushed him on to Grettir’s thrust, so that all went up to the barb-ends; then the spear stood out through Thorir’s back and into Ogmund’s breast, and they both tumbled dead off the spear; then of the others each rushed down the steps as he came forth; Grettir set on each one of them, and in turn hewed with the sword, or thrust with the spear; but they defended themselves with logs that lay on the green, and whatso thing they could lay hands on, therefore the greatest danger it was to deal with them, because of their strength, even though they were weaponless.

Two of the Halogalanders Grettir slew on the green, and then came up the house-carles; they could not come to one mind as to what weapons each should have; now they set on whenever the bearserks gave back, but when they turned about on them, then the house-carles slunk away up to the houses. Six vikings fell there, and of all of them was Grettir the bane. Then the six others got off and came down to the boat-stand, and so into it, and thence they defended themselves with oars. Grettir now got great blows from them, so that at all times he ran the risk of much hurt; but the house-carles went home, and had much to say of their stout onset; the mistress bade them espy what became of Grettir, but that was not to be got out of them. Two more of the bearserks Grettir slew in the boat-stand, but four slipped out by him; and by this, dark night had come on; two of them ran into a corn-barn, at the farm of Windham, which is aforenamed: here they fought for a long time, but at last Grettir killed them both; then was he beyond measure weary and stiff, the night was far gone, and the weather got very cold with the drift of the snow. He was fain to leave the search of the two vikings who were left now, so he walked home to the farm. The mistress had lights lighted in the highest lofts at the windows that they might guide him on his way; and so it was that he found his road home whereas he saw the light.

But when he was come into the door, the mistress went up to him, and bade him welcome.

"Now," she said, "thou hast reaped great glory, and freed me and my house from a shame of which we should never have been healed, but if thou hadst saved us."

Grettir answered, "Methinks I am much the same as I was this evening, when thou didst cast ill words on me."

The mistress answered, "We wotted not that thou wert a man of such prowess as we have now proved thee; now shall all things in the house be at thy will which I may bestow on thee, and which it may be seeming for thee to take; but methinks that Thorfinn will reward thee better still when he comes home."

Grettir answered, "Little of reward will be needed now, but I keep thine offer till the coming of the master; and I have some hope now that ye will sleep in peace as for the bearserks."

Grettir drank little that evening, and lay with his weapons about him through the night. In the morning, when it began to dawn, people were summoned together throughout the island, and a search was set on foot for the bearserks who had escaped the night before; they were found far on in the day under a rock, and were by then dead from cold and wounds; then they were brought unto a tidewashed heap of stones and buried thereunder.

After that folk went home, and the men of that island deemed themselves brought unto fair peace.

Now when Grettir came back to the mistress, he sang this stave

"By the sea’s wash have we made
Graves, where twelve spear-groves are laid;
I alone such speedy end,
Unto all these folk did send.
O fair giver forth of gold,
Whereof can great words be told,
’Midst the deeds one man has wrought,
If this deed should come to nought?"

The good wife said, "Surely thou art like unto very few men who are now living on the earth."

So she set him in the high seat, and all things she did well to him, and now time wore on till Thorfinn’s coming home was looked for.

Chapter 20

How Thorfinn met Grettir at Haramsey again

After Yule Thorfinn made ready for coming home, and he let those folk go with good gifts whom he had bidden to his feast. Now he fares with his following till he comes hard by his boat-stands; they saw a ship lying on the strand, and soon knew it for Thorfinn’s bark, the big one. Now Thorfinn had as yet had no news of the vikings, he bade his men hasten landward, "For I fear," said he, "that friends have not been at work here."

Thorfinn was the first to step ashore before his men, and forthwith he went up to the boat-stand; he saw a keel standing there, and knew it for the bearserks’ ship. Then he said to his men, "My mind misgives me much that here things have come to pass, even such as I would have given the whole island, yea, every whit of what I have herein, that they might never have happed."

They asked why he spake thus. Then he said, "Here have come the vikings, whom I know to be the worst of all Norway, Thorir Paunch and Ogmund the Evil; in good sooth they will hardly have kept house happily for us, and in an Icelander I have but little trust."

Withal he spoke many things hereabout to his fellows.

Now Grettir was at home, and so brought it about, that folk were slow to go down to the shore; and said he did not care much if the goodman Thorfinn had somewhat of a shake at what he saw before him; but when the mistress asked him leave to go, he said she should have her will as to where she

went, but that he himself should stir nowhither. She ran swiftly to meet Thorfinn, and welcomed him cheerily. He was glad thereof, and said, "Praise be to God that I see thee whole and merry, and my daughter in likewise. But how have ye fared since I went from home?"

She answered, "Things have turned out well, but we were near being overtaken by such a shame as we should never have had healing of, if thy winter-guest had not holpen us."

Then Thorfinn spake, "Now shall we sit down, but do thou tell us these tidings."

Then she told all things plainly even as they had come to pass, and praised greatly Grettir’s stoutness and great daring; meanwhile Thorfinn held his peace, but when she had made an end of her tale, he said, "How true is the saw, Long it takes to try a man. But where is Grettir now?"

The goodwife said, "He is at home in the hall."

Thereupon they went home to the farm.

Thorfinn went up to Grettir and kissed him, and thanked him with many fair words for the great heart which he had shown to him; "And I will say to thee what few say to their friends, that I would thou shouldst be in need of men, that then thou mightest know if I were to thee in a man’s stead or not; but for thy good deed I can never reward thee unless thou comest to be in some troublous need; but as to thy abiding with me, that shall ever stand open to thee when thou willest it; and thou shalt be held the first of all my men."

Grettir bade him have much thank therefor. "And," quoth he, "this should I have taken even if thou hadst made me proffer thereof before."

Now Grettir sat there the winter over, and was in the closest friendship with Thorfinn; and for this deed he was now well renowned all over Norway, and there the most, where the bearserks had erst wrought the greatest ill deeds.

This spring Thorfinn asked Grettir what he was about to busy himself with: he said he would go north to Vogar while the fair was. Thorfinn said there was ready for him money as much as he would. Grettir said that he needed no more money at that time than faring-silver: this, Thorfinn said, was full-well due to him, and thereupon went with him to ship.

Now he gave him the short-sword, the good one, which Grettir bore as long as he lived, and the choicest of choice things it was. Withal Thorfinn bade Grettir come to him whenever he might need aid.

But Grettir went north to Vogar, and a many folk were there; many men welcomed him there right heartily who had not seen him before, for the sake of that great deed of prowess which he had done when he saw the vikings; many high-born men prayed him to come and abide with them, but he would fain go back to his friend Thorfinn. Now he took ship in a bark that was owned of a man hight Thorkel, who dwelt in Salft in Halogaland, and was a high-born man. But when Grettir came to Thorkel he welcomed him right heartily, and bade Grettir abide with him that winter, and laid many words thereto.

This offer Grettir took, and was with Thorkel that winter in great joyance and fame.

Chapter 21

Of Grettir and Biorn and the Bear

There was a man, hight Biorn, who was dwelling with Thorkel; he was a man of rash temper, of good birth, and somewhat akin to Thorkel; he was not well loved of men, for he would slander much those who were with Thorkel, and in this wise he sent many away. Grettir and he had little to do together; Biorn thought him of little worth weighed against himself, but Grettir was unyielding, so that things fell athwart between them. Biorn was a mightily boisterous man, and made himself very big; many young men gat into fellowship with him in these things, and would stray abroad by night. Now it befell, that early in winter a savage bear ran abroad from his winter lair, and got so grim that he spared neither man nor beast. Men thought he had been roused by the noise that Biorn and his fellows had made. The brute got so hard to deal with that he tore down the herds of men, and Thorkel had the greatest hurt thereof, for he was the richest man in the neighbourhood.

Now one day Thorkel bade his men to follow him, and search for the lair of the bear. They found it in sheer sea-rocks; there was a high rock and a cave before it down below, but only one track to go up to it: under the cave were scarped rocks, and a heap of stones down by the sea, and sure death it was to all who might fall down there. The bear lay in his lair by day, but went abroad as soon as night fell; no fold could keep sheep safe from him, nor could any dogs be set on him: and all this men thought the heaviest trouble. Biorn, Thorkel’s kinsman, said that the greatest part had been done, as the lair had been found. "And now I shall try," said he, "what sort of play we namesakes shall have together." Grettir made as if he knew not what Biorn said on this matter.

Now it happened always when men went to sleep anights that Biorn disappeared: and one night when Biorn went to the lair, he was aware that the beast was there before him, and roaring savagely. Biorn lay down in the track, and had over him his shield, and was going to wait till the beast should stir abroad as his manner was. Now the bear had an inkling of the man, and got somewhat slow to move off. Biorn waxed very sleepy where he lay, and cannot wake up, and just at this time the beast betakes himself from his lair; now he sees where the man lies, and, hooking at him with his claw, he tears from him the shield and throws it down over the rocks. Biorn started up suddenly awake, takes to his legs and runs home, and it was a near thing that the beast gat him not. This his fellows knew, for they had spies about Biorn’s ways; in the morning they found the shield, and made the greatest jeering at all this.

At Yule Thorkel went himself, and eight of them altogether, and there was Grettir and Biorn and other followers of Thorkel. Grettir had on a fur-cloak, which he laid aside while they set on the beast. It was awkward for an onslaught there, for thereat could folk come but by spear-thrusts, and all the spear-points the bear turned off him with his teeth. Now Biorn urged them on much to the onset, yet he himself went not so nigh as to run the risk of any hurt. Amid this, when men looked least for it, Biorn suddenly seized Grettir’s coat, and cast it into the beast’s lair. Now nought they could wreak on him, and had to go back when the day was far spent. But when Grettir was going, he misses his coat, and he could see that the bear has it cast under him. Then he said, "What man of you has wrought the jest of throwing my cloak into the lair?"

Biorn says, "He who is like to dare to own to it."

Grettir answers, "I set no great store on such matters."

Now they went on their way home, and when they had walked awhile, the thong of Grettir's leggings brake. Thorkel bid them wait for him; but Grettir said there was no need of that. Then said Biorn, "Ye need not think that Grettir will run away from his coat; he will have the honour all to himself, and will slay that beast all alone, wherefrom we have gone back all eight of us; thus would he be such as he is said to be: but sluggishly enow has he fared forth to-day."

"I know not," said Thorkel, "how thou wilt fare in the end, but men of equal prowess I deem you not: lay as few burdens on him as thou mayst, Biorn."

Biorn said, that neither of them should pick and choose words from out his mouth.

Now, when a hill's brow was between them, Grettir went back to the pass, for now there was no striving with others for the onset. He drew the sword, Jokul's gift, but had a loop over the handle of the short-sword, and slipped it up over his hand, and this he did in that he thought he could easier have it at his will if his hand were loose. He went up into the pass forthwith, and when the beast saw a man, it rushed against Grettir exceeding fiercely, and smote at him with that paw which was furthest off from the rock; Grettir hewed against the blow with the sword, and therewith smote the paw above the claws, and took it off; then the beast was fain to smite at Grettir with the paw that was whole, and dropped down therewith on to the docked one, but it was shorter than he wotted of, and withal he tumbled into Grettir's arms. Now he griped at the beast between the ears and held him off, so that he got not at him to bite. And, so Grettir himself says, that herein he deemed he had had the hardest trial of his strength, thus to hold the brute. But now as it struggled fiercely, and the space was narrow, they both tumbled down over the rock; the beast was the heaviest of the two, and came down first upon the stone heap below, Grettir being the uppermost, and the beast was much mangled on its nether side. Now Grettir seized the short-sword and thrust it into the heart of the bear, and that was his bane. Thereafter he went home, taking with him his cloak all tattered, and withal what he had cut from the paw of the bear. Thorkel sat a-drinking when he came into the hall, and much men laughed at the rags of the cloak Grettir had cast over him. Now he threw on to the table what he had chopped off the paw.

Then said Thorkel, "Where is now Biorn my kinsman? never did I see thy irons bite the like of this, Biorn, and my will it is, that thou make Grettir a seemly offer for this shame thou hast wrought on him."

Biorn said that was like to be long about, "and never shall I care whether he likes it well or ill."

Then Grettir sang

"Oft that war-god came to hall
Frighted, when no blood did fall,
In the dusk; who ever cried
On the bear last autumn-tide;
No man saw me sitting there
Late at eve before the lair;
Yet the shaggy one to-day
From his den I drew away."

"Sure enough," said Biorn, "thou hast fared forth well to-day, and two tales thou tellest of us twain therefor; and well I know that thou hast had a good hit at me."

Thorkel said, "I would, Grettir, that thou wouldst not avenge thee on Biorn, but for him I will give a full man-gild if thereby ye may be friends."

Biorn said he might well turn his money to better account, than to boot for this; "And, methinks it is wisest that in my dealings with Grettir one oak should have what from the other it shaves."

Grettir said that he should like that very well. But Thorkel said, "Yet I hope, Grettir, that thou wilt do this for my sake, not to do aught against Biorn while ye are with me."

"That shall be," said Grettir.

Biorn said he would walk fearless of Grettir wheresoever they might meet.

Grettir smiled mockingly, but would not take boot for Biorn. So they were here that winter through.

Chapter 22

Of the Slaying of Biorn

In the spring Grettir went north to Vogar with chapmen. He and Thorkel parted in friendship; but Biorn went west to England, and was the master of Thorkel’s ship that went thither. Biorn dwelt thereabout that summer and bought such things for Thorkel as he had given him word to get; but as the autumn wore on he sailed from the west. Grettir was at Vogar till the fleet broke up; then he sailed from the north with some chapmen until they came to a harbour at an island before the mouth of Drontheimfirth, called Gartar, where they pitched their tents. Now when they were housed, a ship came sailing havenward from the south along the land; they soon saw that it was an England farer; she took the strand further out, and her crew went ashore; Grettir and his fellows went to meet them. But when they met, Grettir saw that Biorn was among those men, and spake

"It is well that we have met here; now we may well take up our ancient quarrel, and now I will try which of us twain may do the most."

Biorn said that was an old tale to him, "but if there has been aught of such things between us, I will boot for it, so that thou mayst think thyself well holden thereof."

Then Grettir sang

"In hard strife I slew the bear,
Thereof many a man doth hear;
Then the cloak I oft had worn,
By the beast to rags was torn;
Thou, O braggart ring-bearer,
Wrought that jest upon me there,
Now thou payest for thy jest,
Not in words am I the best?"

Biorn said, that oft had greater matters than these been atoned for.

Grettir said, "That few had chosen hitherto to strive to trip him up with spite and envy, nor ever had he taken fee for such, and still must matters fare in likewise. Know thou that we shall not both of us go hence whole men if I may have my will, and a coward’s name will I lay on thy back, if thou darest not to fight."

Now Biorn saw that it would avail nought to try to talk himself free; so he took his weapons and went aland.

Then they ran one at the other and fought, but not long before Biorn got sore wounded, and presently fell dead to earth. But when Biorn’s fellows saw that, they went to their ship, and made off north along the land to meet Thorkel and told him of this hap: he said it had not come to pass ere it might have been looked for.

Soon after this Thorkel went south to Drontheim, and met there Earl Svein. Grettir went south to Mere after the slaying of Biorn, and found his friend Thorfinn, and told him what had befallen. Thorfinn gave him good welcome, and said

"It is well now that thou art in need of a friend; with me shalt thou abide until these matters have come to an end."

Grettir thanked him for his offer, and said he would take it now.

Earl Svein was dwelling in Drontheim, at Steinker, when he heard of Biorn’s slaying; at that time there was with him Hiarandi, the brother of Biorn, and he was the Earl’s man; he was exceeding wroth when he heard of the slaying of Biorn, and begged the Earl’s aid in the matter, and the Earl gave his word thereto.

Then he sent men to Thorfinn and summoned to him both him and Grettir. Thorfinn and Grettir made ready at once at the Earl’s bidding to go north to Drontheim to meet him. Now the Earl held a council on the matter, and bade Hiarandi to be thereat; Hiarandi said he would not bring his brother to purse; "and I shall either fare in a like wise with him, or else wreak vengeance for him." Now when the matter was looked into, the Earl found that Biorn had been guilty towards Grettir in many ways; and Thorfinn offered weregild, such as the Earl deemed might be befitting for Biorn’s kin to take; and thereon he had much to say on the freedom which Grettir had wrought for men north there in the land, when he slew the bearserks, as has been aforesaid.

The Earl answered, "With much truth thou sayest this, Thorfinn, that was the greatest land-ridding, and good it seems to us to take weregild because of thy words; and withal Grettir is a man well renowned because of his strength and prowess."

Hiarandi would not take the settlement, and they broke up the meeting. Thorfinn got his kinsman Arnbiorn to go about with Grettir day by day, for he knew that Hiarandi lay in wait for his life.

Chapter 23

The Slaying of Hiarandi

It happened one day that Grettir and Arnbiorn were walking through some streets for their sport, that as they came past a certain court gate, a man bounded forth therefrom with axe borne aloft, and drave it at Grettir with both hands; he was all unawares of this, and walked on slowly; Arnbiorn caught timely sight of the man, and seized Grettir, and thrust him on so hard that he fell on his knee; the axe smote the shoulder-blade, and cut sideways out under the arm-pit, and a great wound it was. Grettir turned about nimbly, and drew the short-sword, and saw that there was Hiarandi. Now the axe stuck fast in the road, and it was slow work for Hiarandi to draw it to him again, and in this very nick of time Grettir hewed at him, and the blow fell on the upper arm, near the shoulder, and cut it off; then the fellows of Hiarandi rushed forth, five of them, and a fight forthwith befell, and speedy change happed

there, for Grettir and Arnbiorn slew those who were with Hiarandi, all but one, who got off, and forthwith went to the Earl to tell him these tidings.

The Earl was exceeding wroth when he heard of this, and the second day thereafter he had a Thing summoned. Then they, Thorfinn and Grettir, came both to the Thing. The Earl put forth against Grettir the guilt for these manslaughters; he owned them all, and said he had had to defend his hands.

"Whereof methinks I bear some marks on me," says Grettir, "and surely I had found death if Arnbiorn had not saved me."

The Earl answered that it was ill hap that Grettir was not slain.

"For many a man’s bane wilt thou be if thou livest, Grettir."

Then came to the Earl, Bessi, son of Skald-Torfa, a fellow and a friend to Grettir; he and Thorfinn went before the Earl had prayed him respite for Grettir, and offered, that the Earl alone should doom in this matter, but that Grettir might have peace and leave to dwell in the land.

The Earl was slow to come to any settlement, but suffered himself to be led thereto because of their prayers. There respite was granted to Grettir till the next spring; still the Earl would not settle the peace till Gunnar, the brother of Biorn and Hiarandi, was thereat; now Gunnar was a court-owner in Tunsberg.

In the spring, the Earl summoned Grettir and Thorfinn east to Tunsberg, for he would dwell there east while the most sail was thereat. Now they went east thither, and the Earl was before them in the town when they came. Here Grettir found his brother, Thorstein Dromond, who was fain of him and bade him abide with him: Thorstein was a court-owner in the town. Grettir told him all about his matters, and Thorstein gave a good hearing thereto, but bade him beware of Gunnar. And so the spring wore on.

Chapter 24

Of the Slaying of Gunnar, and Grettir’s strife with Earl Svein

Now Gunnar was in the town, and lay in wait for Grettir always and everywhere. It happened on a day that Grettir sat in a booth a-drinking, for he would not throw himself in Gunnar’s way. But, when he wotted of it the least, the door was driven at so that it brake asunder, four men all-armed burst in, and there was Gunnar and his fellows.

They set on Grettir; but he caught up his weapons which hung over him, and then drew aback into the corner, whence he defended himself, having before him the shield, but dealing blows with the short-sword, nor did they have speedy luck with him. Now he smote at one of Gunnar’s fellows, and more he needed not; then he advanced forth on the floor, and therewith they were driven doorward through the booth, and there fell another man of Gunnar’s; then were Gunnar and his fellows fain of flight; one of them got to the door, struck his foot against the threshold and lay there grovelling and was slow in getting to his feet. Gunnar had his shield before him, and gave back before Grettir, but he set on him fiercely and leaped up on the cross-beam by the door. Now the hands of Gunnar and the shield were within the door, but Grettir dealt a blow down amidst Gunnar and the shield and cut off both his hands by the wrist, and he fell aback out of the door; then Grettir dealt him his death-blow.

But in this nick of time got to his feet Gunnar’s man, who had lain fallen awhile, and he ran straightway to see the Earl, and to tell him these tidings.

Earl Svein was wondrous wroth at this tale, and forthwith summoned a Thing in the town. But when Thorfinn and Thorstein Dromond knew this, they brought together their kin and friends and came thronging to the Thing. Very cross-grained was the Earl, and it was no easy matter to come to speech with him. Thorfinn went up first before the Earl and said, "For this cause am I come hither, to offer thee peace and honour for these man-slayings that Grettir has wrought; thou alone shall shape and settle all, if the man hath respite of his life."

The Earl answered sore wroth: "Late wilt thou be loth to ask respite for Grettir; but in my mind it is that thou hast no good cause in court; he has now slain three brothers, one at the heels of the other, who were men so brave that they would none bear the other to purse. Now it will not avail thee, Thorfinn, to pray for Grettir, for I will not thus bring wrongs into the land so as to take boot for such unmeasured misdeeds."

Then came forward Bessi, Skald-Torfa’s son, and prayed the Earl to take the offered settlement. "Thereto," he said, "I will give up my goods, for Grettir is a man of great kin and a good friend of mine; thou mayst well see, Lord, that it is better to respite one man’s life and to have therefor the thanks of many, thyself alone dooming the fines, than to break down thine own honour, and risk whether thou canst seize the man or not."

The Earl answered, "Thou farest well herein, Bessi, and showest at all times that thou art a high-minded man; still I am loth thus to break the laws of the land, giving respite to men of foredoomed lives."

Then stepped forth Thorstein Dromond and greeted the Earl, and made offers on Grettir’s behalf, and laid thereto many fair words. The Earl asked for what cause he made offers for this man. Thorstein said that they were brothers. The Earl said that he had not known it before: "Now it is but the part of a man for thee to help him, but because we have made up our mind not to take money for these man-slayings, we shall make all men of equal worth here, and Grettir’s life will we have, whatsoever it shall cost and whensoever chance shall serve."

Thereat the Earl sprang up, and would listen in nowise to the offered atonements.

Now Thorfinn and his folk went home to Thorstein’s court and made ready. But when the Earl saw this he bade all his men take weapons, and then he went thither with his folk in array. But before he came up Thorfinn and his men ordered themselves for defence before the gate of the court. Foremost stood Thorfinn and Thorstein and Grettir, and then Bessi, and each of them had a large following of men with him.

The Earl bade them to give up Grettir, nor to bring themselves into an evil strait; they made the very same offer as before. The Earl would not hearken thereto. Then Thorfinn and Thorstein said that the Earl should have more ado yet for the getting of Grettir’s life, "For one fate shall befall us all, and it will be said thou workest hard for one man’s life, if all we have to be laid on earth therefor."

The Earl said he should spare none of them, and now they were at the very point to fight.

Then went to the Earl many men of goodwill, and prayed him not to push matters on to such great evils, and said they would have to pay heavily before all these were slain. The Earl found this rede to be wholesome, and became somewhat softened thereat.

Thereafter they drew up an agreement to which Thorstein and Thorfinn were willing enough, now that Grettir should have respite of his life. The Earl spake: "Know ye," quoth he, "that though I deal by way of mean words with these man-slayings at this time, yet I call this no settlement, but I am loth to fight against my own folk; though I see that ye make little of me in this matter."

Then said Thorfinn, "This is a greater honour for thee, Lord, for that thou alone wilt doom the weregild."

Then the Earl said that Grettir should go in peace, as for him, out to Iceland, when ships fared out, if so they would; they said that they would take this. They paid the Earl fines to his mind, and parted from him with little friendship. Grettir went with Thorfinn; he and his brother Thorstein parted fondly.

Thorfinn got great fame for the aid he had given Grettir against such overwhelming power as he had to deal with: none of the men who had helped Grettir were ever after well loved of the Earl, save Bessi.

So quoth Grettir

"To our helping came
The great of name;
Thorfinn was there
Born rule to bear;
When all bolts fell
Into locks, and hell
Cried out for my life
In the Tunsberg strife.
The Dromund fair
Of red seas was there,
The stone of the bane
Of steel-gods vain:
From Bylest’s kin
My life to win,
Above all men
He laboured then.

Then the king’s folk
Would strike no stroke
To win my head;
So great grew dread;
For the leopard came
With byrni’s flame,
And on thoughts-burg wall
Should that bright fire fall."

Grettir went back north with Thorfinn, and was with him till he gat him to ship with chapmen who were bound out to Iceland: he gave him many fair gifts of raiment, and a fair-stained saddle and a bridle withal. They parted in friendship, and Thorfinn bade him come to him whensoever he should come back to Norway.

Chapter 25

The Slaying of Thorgils Makson

Asmund the Greyhaired lived on at Biarg, while Grettir was abroad, and by that time he was thought to be the greatest of bonders in Midfirth. Thorkel Krafla died during those seasons that Grettir was out of Iceland. Thorvald Asgeirson farmed then at the Ridge in Waterdale, and waxed a great chief. He was the father of Dalla whom Isleif had to wife, he who afterwards was bishop at Skalholt.

Asmund had in Thorvald the greatest help in suits and in many other matters. At Asmund’s grew up a man, hight Thorgils, called Thorgils Makson, near akin to Asmund. Thorgils was a man of great strength and gained much money by Asmund’s foresight.

Asmund bought for Thorgils the land at Brookmeet, and there he farmed. Thorgils was a great store-gatherer, and went a-searching to the Strands every year, and there he gat for himself whales and other gettings; and a stout-hearted man he was.

In those days was at its height the waxing of the foster-brothers, Thorgeir Havarson and Thormod Coalbrowskald; they had a boat and went therein far and wide, and were not thought men of much even-dealing. It chanced one summer that Thorgils Makson found a whale on the common drift-lands, and forthwith he and his folk set about cutting it up.

But when the foster-brothers heard thereof they went thither, and at first their talk had a likely look out. Thorgils offered that they should have the half of the uncut whale; but they would have for themselves all the uncut, or else divide all into halves, both the cut and the uncut. Thorgils flatly refused to give up what was cut of the whale; and thereat things grew hot between them, and forthwithal both sides caught up their weapons and fought. Thorgeir and Thorgils fought long together without either losing or gaining, and both were of the eagerest. Their strife was both fierce and long, but the end of it was, that Thorgils fell dead to earth before Thorgeir; but Thormod and the men of Thorgils fought in another place; Thormod had the best of that strife, and three of Thorgils’ men fell before him. After the slaying of Thorgils, his folk went back east to Midfirth, and brought his dead body with them. Men thought that they had the greatest loss in him. But the foster-brothers took all the whale to themselves.

This meeting Thormod tells of in that drapa that he made on Thorgeir dead. Asmund the Greyhaired heard of the slaying of Thorgils his kinsman; he was suitor in the case for Thorgils’ slaying, he went and took witnesses to the wounds, and summoned the case before the Althing, for then this seemed to be law, as the case had happened in another quarter. And so time wears on.

Chapter 26

Of Thorstein Kuggson, and the gathering for the Bloodsuit for the Slaying of Thorgils Makson

There was a man called Thorstein, he was the son of Thorkel Kugg, the son of Thord the Yeller, the son of Olaf Feilan, the son of Thorstein the Red, the son of Aud the Deeply-wealthy. The mother of Thorstein Kuggson was Thurid the daughter of Asgeir Madpate, Asgeir was father’s brother of Asmund the Greyhaired.

Thorstein Kuggson was suitor in the case about Thorgils Makson’s slaying along with Asmund the Greyhaired, who now sent word to Thorstein that he should come to meet him. Thorstein was a great champion, and the wildest-tempered of men; he went at once to meet his kinsman Asmund, and they talked the blood-suit over together. Thorstein was mightily wroth and said that no atonement should be for this, and said they had strength of kin enough to bring about for the slaying either outlawry or vengeance on men. Asmund said that he would follow him in whatsoever he would have done. They rode north to Thorvald their kinsman to pray his aid, and he quickly gave his word and said yea thereto. So they settled the suit against Thorgeir and Thormod; then Thorstein rode home to his farmstead, he then farmed at Liarskogar in Hvamsveit. Skeggi farmed at Hvam, he also joined in the suit with Thorstein. Skeggi was the son of Thorarinn Fylsenni, the son of Thord the Yeller; the mother of Skeggi was Fridgerd, daughter of Thord of Head.

These had a many men with them at the Thing, and pushed their suit with great eagerness.

Asmund and Thorvald rode from the north with six tens of men, and sat at Liarskogar many nights.

Chapter 27

The Suit for the Slaying of Thorgils Makson

A man hight Thorgils abode at Reek-knolls in those days, he was the son of Ari, the son of Mar, the son of Atli the Red, the son of Ulf the Squinter, who settled at Reekness; the mother of Thorgils Arisen was Thorgerd, the daughter of Alf a-Dales; another daughter of Alf was Thorelf, mother of Thorgeir Havarson. There had Thorgeir good kinship to trust in, for Thorgils was the greatest chief in the Westfirthers’ quarter. He was a man of such bountifulness, that he gave food to any free-born man as long as he would have it, and therefore there was at all times a throng of people at Reek-knolls; thus had Thorgils much renown of his house-keeping. He was a man withal of good will and foreknowledge. Thorgeir was with Thorgils in winter, but went to the Strands in summer.

After the slaying of Thorgils Makson, Thorgeir went to Reek-knolls and told Thorgils Arisen these tidings; Thorgils said that he was ready to give him harbour with him, "But, methinks," he says, "that they will be heavy in the suit, and I am loth to eke out the troubles. Now I shall send a man to Thorstein and bid weregild for the slaying of Thorgils; but if he will not take atonement I shall not defend the case stiffly."

Thorgeir said he would trust to his foresight. In autumn Thorgils sent a man to Thorstein Kuggson to try settling the case, but he was cross-grained to deal with as to the taking money for the blood-suit of Thorgils Makson; but about the other man-slayings, he said he would do as wise men should urge him. Now when Thorgils heard this, he called Thorgeir to him for a talk, and asked him what kind of aid he now deemed meetest for him; Thorgeir said that it was most to his mind to go abroad if he should be outlawed. Thorgils said that should be tried. A ship lay up Northriver in Burgfirth; in that keel Thorgils secretly paid faring for the foster-brothers, and thus the winter passed. Thorgils heard that Asmund and Thorstein drew together many men to the Althing, and sat in Liarskogar. He drew out the time of riding from home, for he would that Asmund and Thorstein should have ridden by before him to the south, when he came from the west; and so it fell out. Thorgils rode south, and with him rode the foster-brothers. In this ride Thorgeir killed Bundle-Torfi of Marswell, and Skuf withal, and Biarni in Dog-dale; thus says Thormod in Thorgeir’s-Drapa

"Mighty strife the warrior made,
When to earth was Makson laid,
Well the sword-shower wrought he there,
Flesh the ravens got to tear;
Then when Skuf and Biarni fell,
He was there the tale to tell;
Sea-steed’s rider took his way
Through the thickest of the fray."

Thorgils settled the peace for the slaying of Skuf and Biarni then and there in the Dale, and delayed no longer than his will was before; Thorgeir went to ship, but Thorgils to the Althing, and came not thither until men were going to the courts.

Then Asmund the Greyhaired challenged the defence for the blood-suit on the slaying of Thorgils Makson. Thorgils went to the court and offered weregild for the slaying, if thereby Thorgeir might become free of guilt; he put forth for defence in the suit whether they had not free catch on all common foreshores. The lawman was asked if this was a lawful defence. Skapti was the lawman, and backed Asmund for the sake of their kinship. He said this was law if they were equal men, but said that bonders had a right to take before batchelors. Asmund said that Thorgils had offered an even sharing to the foster-brothers in so much of the whale as was uncut when they came thereto; and therewith that way of defence was closed against them. Now Thorstein and his kin followed up the suit with much eagerness, and nought was good to them but that Thorgeir should be made guilty.

Thorgils saw that one of two things was to be done, either to set on with many men, not knowing what might be gained thereby, or to suffer them to go on as they would; and, whereas Thorgeir had been got on board ship, Thorgils let the suit go on unheeded.

Thorgeir was outlawed, but for Thormod was taken weregild, and he to be quit. By this blood-suit Thorstein and Asmund were deemed to have waxed much. And now men ride home from the Thing.

Some men would hold talk that Thorgils had lightly backed the case, but he heeded their talk little, and let any one say thereon what he would.

But when Thorgeir heard of this outlawry, he said

"Fain am I that those who have made me an outlaw should have full pay for this, ere all be over."

There was a man called Gaut Sleitason, who was akin to Thorgils Makson. Gaut had made ready to go in this same ship wherein Thorgeir was to sail. He bristled up against Thorgeir, and showed mighty ill-will against him and went about scowling; when the chapmen found this out, they thought it far from safe that both should sail in one ship. Thorgeir said he heeded not how much soever Gaut would bend his brows on him; still it was agreed that Gaut should take himself off from the ship, whereupon he went north into the upper settlements, and that time nought happed between him and Thorgeir, but out of this sprang up between them ill blood, as matters showed after.

Chapter 28

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

This summer Grettir Asmundson came out to Skagafirth: he was in those days so famed a man for strength and prowess, that none was deemed his like among young men. He rode home to Biarg forthwith, and Asmund welcomed him meetly. At that time Atli managed the farming matters, and well things befell betwixt the brothers.

But now Grettir waxed so overbearing, that he deemed that nought was too much for him to do. At that time had many men grown into full manhood who were young in the days when Grettir was wont to play with them on Midfirth-water before he went abroad; one of these was Audun, who then dwelt at Audunstead, in Willowdale; he was the son of Asgeir, the son of Audun, the son of Asgeir Madpate; of all men he was the strongest north there; but he was thought to be the gentlest of neighbours. Now it came into Grettir's mind that he had had the worst of Audun in that ball-play whereof is told before; and now he would fain try which of the twain had ripened the most since then. For this cause Grettir took his way from home, and fared unto Audunstead. This was in early mowing tide; Grettir was well dight, and rode in a fair-stained saddle of very excellent workmanship, which Thorfinn had given him; a good horse he had withal, and all weapons of the best. Grettir came early in the day to Audunstead, and knocked at the door. Few folk were within; Grettir asked if Audun was at home. Men said that he had gone to fetch victuals from the hill-dairy. Then Grettir took the bridle off his horse; the field was unmowed, and the horse went whereas the grass was the highest. Grettir went into the hall, sat down on the seat-beam, and thereon fell asleep. Soon after Audun came home, and sees a horse grazing in the field with a fair-stained saddle on; Audun was bringing victuals on two horses, and carried curds on one of them, in drawn-up hides, tied round about: this fashion men called curd-bags. Audun took the loads off the horses and carried the curd-bags in his arms into the house.

Now it was dark before his eyes, and Grettir stretched his foot from out the beam so that Audun fell flat down head-foremost on to the curd-bag, whereby the bonds of the bag brake; Audun leaped up and asked who was that rascal in the way. Grettir named himself.

Then said Audun, "Rashly hast thou done herein; what is thine errand then?"

Grettir said, "I will fight with thee."

"First I will see about my victuals," said Audun.

"That thou mayst well do," said Grettir, "if thou canst not charge other folk therewith."

Then Audun stooped down and caught up the curd-bag and dashed it against Grettir's bosom, and bade him first take what was sent him; and therewith was Grettir all smothered in the curds; and a greater shame he deemed that than if Audun had given him a great wound.

Now thereon they rushed at one another and wrestled fiercely; Grettir set on with great eagerness, but Audun gave back before him. Yet he feels that Grettir has outgrown him in strength. Now all things in their way were kicked out of place, and they were borne on wrestling to and fro throughout all the hall; neither spared his might, but still Grettir was the toughest of the twain, and at last Audun fell, having torn all weapons from Grettir.

Now they grapple hard with one another, and huge cracking was all around them. Withal a great din was heard coming through the earth underneath the farmstead, and Grettir heard some one ride up to the houses, get off his horse, and stride in with great strides; he sees a man come up, of goodly growth, in a red kirtle and with a helmet on his head. He took his way into the hall, for he had heard clamorous doings there as they were struggling together; he asked what was in the hall.

Grettir named himself, "But who asks thereof?" quoth he.

"Bardi am I hight," said the new comer.

"Art thou Bardi, the son of Gudmund, from Asbiornsness?"

"That very man am I," said Bardi; "but what art thou doing?"

Grettir said, "We, Audun and I, are playing here in sport."

"I know not as to the sport thereof," said Bardi, "nor are ye even men either; thou art full of unfairness and overbearing, and he is easy and good to deal with; so let him stand up forthwith."

Grettir said, "Many a man stretches round the door to the lock; and meseems it lies more in thy way to avenge thy brother Hall than to meddle in the dealings betwixt me and Audun."

"At all times I hear this," said Bardi, "nor know I if that will be avenged, but none the less I will that thou let Audun be at peace, for he is a quiet man."

Grettir did so at Bardi’s bidding, nathless, little did it please him. Bardi asked for what cause they strove.

Grettir sang

"Prithee, Audun, who can tell,
But that now thy throat shall swell;
That from rough hands thou shalt gain
By our strife a certain pain.
E’en such wrong as I have done,
I of yore from Audun won,
When the young, fell-creeping lad
At his hands a choking had."

Bardi said that certes it was a matter to be borne with, if he had had to avenge himself.

"Now I will settle matters between you," quoth Bardi; "I will that ye part, leaving things as they are, that thereby there may be an end of all between you."

This they let hold good, but Grettir took ill liking to Bardi and his brothers.

Now they all rode off, and when they were somewhat on their way, Grettir spake

"I have heard that thou hast will to go to Burgfirth this summer, and I now offer to go south with thee; and methinks that herein I do for thee more than thou art worthy of."

Hereat was Bardi glad, and speedily said yea thereto, and bade him have thanks for this; and thereupon they parted. But a little after Bardi came back and said

"I will have it known that thou goest not unless my foster-father Thorarin will have it so, for he shall have all the rule of the faring."

"Well mightest thou, methinks, have full freedom as to thine own redes," said Grettir, "and my faring I will not have laid under the choice of other folk; and I shall mislike it if thou easiest me aside from thy fellowship."

Now either went their way, and Bardi said he should let Grettir know for sure if Thorarin would that he should fare with him, but that otherwise he might sit quiet at home. Grettir rode home to Biarg, but Bardi to his own house.

Chapter 29

Of the Horse-fight at Longfit.

That summer was settled to be a great horse-fight at Longfit, below Reeks. Thither came many men. Atli of Biarg had a good horse, a black-maned roan of Keingala's kin, and father and son had great love for that horse. The brothers, Kormak and Thorgils of Meal, had a brown horse, trusty in fight. These were to fight their horse against Atli of Biarg. And many other good horses were there.

Odd, the Foundling-skald, of Kormak's kin, was to follow the horse of his kinsman through the day. Odd was then growing a big man, and bragged much of himself, and was untameable and reckless. Grettir asked of Atli his brother, who should follow his horse.

"I am not so clear about that," said he.

"Wilt thou that I stand by it?" said Grettir.

"Be thou then very peaceable, kinsman," said Atli, "for here have we to deal with overbearing men."

"Well, let them pay for their own insolence," said Grettir, "if they know not how to hold it back."

Now are the horses led out, but all stood forth on the river-bank tied together. There was a deep hollow in the river down below the bank. The horses bit well at each other, and the greatest sport it was.

Odd drave on his horse with all his might, but Grettir held back, and seized the tail with one hand, and the staff wherewith he goaded the horse he held in the other. Odd stood far before his horse, nor was it so sure that he did not goad Atli's horse from his hold. Grettir made as if he saw it not. Now the horses bore forth towards the river. Then Odd drave his staff at Grettir, and smote the shoulder-blade, for that Grettir turned the shoulder towards him: that was so mighty a stroke, that the flesh shrank from under it, but Grettir was little scratched.

Now in that nick of time the horses reared up high, and Grettir ran under his horse's hocks, and thrust his staff so hard at the side of Odd that three ribs brake in him, but he was hurled out into deep water, together with his horse and all the horses that were tied together. Then men swam out to him and dragged him out of the river; then was a great hooting made thereat; Kormak's folk ran to their weapons, as did the men of Biarg in another place. But when the Ramfirthers and the men of Waterness saw that, they went betwixt them, and they were parted and went home, but both sides had ill-will one with the other, though they sat peacefully at home for a while.

Atli was sparing of speech over this, but Grettir was right unsparing, and said that they would meet another time if his will came to pass.

Chapter 30

Of Thorbiorn Oxmain and Thorbiorn Tardy, and of Grettir's meeting with Kormak on Ramfirth-neck.

Thorbiorn was the name of a man who dwelt at Thorodstead in Ramfirth; he was the son of Arnor Hay-nose, the son of Thorod, who had settled Ramfirth on that side out as far as Bank was on the other.

Thorbiorn was the strongest of all men; he was called Oxmain. Thorod was the name of his brother, he was called Drapa-Stump; their mother was Gerd, daughter of Bodvar, from Bodvars-knolls. Thorbiorn was a great and hardy warrior, and had many men with him; he was noted as being worse at getting servants than other men, and barely gave he wages to any man, nor was he thought a good man to deal with. There was a kinsman of his hight Thorbiorn, and bynamed Tardy; he was a sailor, and the namesakes were partners. He was ever at Thorodstead, and was thought to better Thorbiorn but little. He was a fault-finding fellow, and went about jeering at most men.

There was a man hight Thorir, the son of Thorkel of Boardere. He farmed first at Meals in Ramfirth; his daughter was Helga, whom Sleita-Helgi had to wife, but after the man-slaying in Fairslope Thorir set up for himself his abode south in Hawkdale, and farmed at the Pass, and sold the land at Meals to Thorhall, son of Gamli the Vendlander. His son was Gamli, who had to wife Ranveig, daughter of Asmund the Greyhaired, and Grettir's sister. They dwelt at that time at Meals, and had good hap. Thorir of the Pass had two sons, one hight Gunnar, the other Thorgeir; they were both hopeful men, and had then taken the farm after their father, yet were for ever with Thorbiorn Oxmain, and were growing exceeding unruly.

The summer after that just told, Kormak and Thorgils and Narfi their kinsman rode south to Northriverdale, on some errand of theirs. Odd the Foundling-skald fared also with them, and by then was gotten healed of the stiffness he gained at the horse-fight. But while they were south of the heath, Grettir fared from Biarg, and with him two house-carles of Atli's. They rode over to Bowerfell, and thence over the mountain neck to Ramfirth, and came to Meals in the evening.

They were there three nights; Ranveig and Gamli welcomed Grettir well, and bade him abide with them, but he had will to ride home.

Then Grettir heard that Kormak and his fellows were come from the south, and had guested at Tongue through the night. Grettir got ready early to leave Meals; Gamli offered him men to go with him. Now Grim was the name of Gamli's brother; he was of all men the swiftest; he rode with Grettir with another man; they were five in all. Thus they rode on till they came to Ramfirth-neck, west of Bowerfell. There stands a huge stone that is called Grettir's heave; for he tried long that day to lift that stone, and thus they delayed till Kormak and his fellows were come. Grettir rode to meet them, and both sides jumped off their horses. Grettir said it was more like free men now to deal blows of the biggest, than to fight with staves like wandering churles. Then Kormak bade them take the challenge in manly wise, and do their best. Thereafter they ran at one another and fought. Grettir went before his men, and bade them take heed, that none came at his back. Thus they fought a while, and men were wounded on both sides.

Now Thorbiorn Oxmain had ridden that day over the neck to Bowerfell, and when he rode back he saw their meeting. There were with him then Thorbiorn the Tardy, and Gunnar and Thorgeir, Thorir's sons, and Thorod Drapa-Stump. Now when they came thereto, Thorbiorn called on his men to go

between them. But the others were by then so eager that they could do nought. Grettir broke forth fiercely, and before him were the sons of Thorir, and they both fell as he thrust them from him; they waxed exceeding furious thereat, insomuch that Gunnar dealt a death-blow at a house-carle of Atli; and when Thorbiorn saw that, he bade them part, saying withal that he would aid which side soever should pay heed to his words. By then were fallen two house-carles of Kormak, but Grettir saw, that it would hardly do if Thorbiorn should bring aid to them against him, wherefore now he gave up the battle, and all were wounded who had been at that meeting. But much it misliked Grettir that they had been parted.

Thereafter either side rode home, nor did they settle peace after these slayings. Thorbiorn the Tardy made much mocking at all this, therefore things began to worsen betwixt the men of Biarg and Thorbiorn Oxmain, so that therefrom fell much ill-will as came to be known after. No boot was bidden to Atli for his house-carle, but he made as if he knew it not. Grettir sat at home at Biarg until Twainmonth. Nor is it said in story that he and Kormak met ever again after these things betid.

Chapter 31

How Grettir met Bardi, the Son of Gudmund, as he came back from the Heath-slayings

Bardi, the son of Gudmund, and his brothers, rode home to Asbiornsness after their parting with Grettir.

They were the sons of Gudmund, the son of Solmund. The mother of Solmund was Thorlaug, the daughter of Saemund, the South-Island man, the foster-brother of Ingimund the Old, and Bardi was a very noble man.

Now soon he rode to find Thorarin the Wise, his foster-father. He welcomed Bardi well, and asked what gain he had got of followers and aid, for they had before taken counsel over Bardi’s journey. Bardi answered that he had got the aid of that man to his fellow, whose aid he deemed better than that of any other twain. Thorarin got silent thereat, and then said,

"That man will be Grettir Asmundson."

"Sooth is the sage’s guess," said Bardi; "that is the very man, foster-father."

Thorarin answered, "True it is, that Grettir is much before any other man of those who are to choose in our land, and late will he be won with weapons, if he be hale, yet it misdoubts me how far he will bring thee luck; but of thy following all must not be luckless, and enough ye will do, though he fare not with thee: nowise shall he go if I may have my will."

"This I could not have deemed, foster-father," said he, "that thou wouldst grudge me the aid of the bravest of men, if my need should be hard. A man cannot foresee all things when he is driven on as methinks I am."

"Thou wilt do well," said Thorarin; "though thou abidest by my foresight."

Now thus must things be, even as Thorarin would, that no word more was sent to Grettir, but Bardi fared south to Burgfirth, and then befell the Heath-slayings.

Grettir was at Biarg when he heard that Bardi had ridden south; he started up in anger for that no word had been sent to him, and said that not thus should they part. He had news of them when they were looked for coming from the south, and thereat he rode down to Thorey’s-peak, for the waylaying of Bardi’s folk as they came back from the south: he fared from the homestead up on to the hill-side, and abode there. That same day rode Bardi and his men north over Twodaysway, from the Heath-slayings; they were six in all, and every man sore wounded; and when they came forth by the homestead, then said Bardi

"A man there is up on the hill-side; a big man, armed. What man do ye take him to be?"

They said that they wotted not who he was.

Bardi said, "Methinks there," quoth he, "is Grettir Asmundson; and if so it is, there will he meet us. I deem that it has misliked him that he fared not with us, but methinks we are not in good case, if he be bent on doing us harm. I now shall send after men to Thorey’s-peak, and stake nought on the chance of his ill-will."

They said this was a good rede, and so was it done.

Thereafter Bardi and his folk rode on their way. Grettir saw where they fared, and went in the way before them, and when they met, either greeted other.

Grettir asked for tidings, but Bardi told them fearlessly, even as they were. Grettir asked what men were in that journey with him. Bardi said that there were his brothers, and Eyulf his brother-in-law.

"Thou hast now cleared thyself from all blame," said Grettir; "but now is it best that we try between us who is of most might here."

Said Bardi, "Too nigh to my garth have deeds of hard need been, than that I should fight with thee without a cause, and well methinks have I thrust these from me."

"Thou growest soft, methinks, Bardi," said Grettir, "since thou durst not fight with me."

"Call that what thou wilt," said Bardi; "but in some other stead would I that thou wreak thine high-handedness than here on me; and that is like enough, for now does thy rashness pass all bounds."

Grettir thought ill of his spaedom, and now doubted within himself whether he should set on one or other of them; but it seemed rash to him, as they were six and he one: and in that nick of time came up the men from Thorey’s-peak to the aid of Bardi and his folk; then Grettir drew off from them, and turned aside to his horse. But Bardi and his fellows went on their way, nor were there farewells between them at parting.

No further dealings between Bardi and Grettir are told of after these things betid.

Now so has Grettir said that he deemed himself well matched to fight with most men, though they were three together, but he would have no mind to flee before four, without trying it; but against more would he fight only if he must needs defend his hand, as is said in this stave

"My life trust I ’gainst three
Skilled in Mist’s mystery;
Whatso in Hilda’s weather
Shall bring the swords together;
If over four they are

My wayfaring that bar
No gale of swords will I
Wake with them willingly."

After his parting with Bardi, Grettir fared to Biarg, and very ill he it thought that he might nowhere try his strength, and searched all about if anywhere might be somewhat wherewith he might contend.

Chapter 32

Of the Haunting at Thorhall-stead; and how Thorhall took a Shepherd by the rede of Skapti the Lawman, and of what befell thereafter

There was a man hight Thorhall, who dwelt at Thorhall-stead, in Shady-vale, which runs up from Waterdale. Thorhall was the son of Grim, son of Thorhall, the son of Fridmund, who settled Shady-vale. Thorhall had a wife hight Gudrun. Grim was their son, and Thurid their daughter; they were well-nigh grown up.

Thorhall was a rich man, but mostly in cattle, so that no man had so much of live-stock as he. He was no chief, but an honest bonder he was. Much was that place haunted, and hardly could he get a shepherd that he deemed should serve his turn. He sought counsel of many men as to what he might do therewith, but none gave him a rede that might serve him. Thorhall rode each summer to the Thing, and good horses he had. But one summer at the Althing, Thorhall went to the booth of Skapti Thorodson the Lawman. Skapti was the wisest of men, and wholesome were his redes when folk prayed him for them. But he and his father differed thus much, that Thorod was foretelling, and yet was called under-handed of some folk; but Skapti showed forth to every man what he deemed would avail most, if it were not departed from, therefore was he called "Father-betterer."

Now Thorhall went into Skapti’s booth, and Skapti greeted him well, for he knew that he was a man rich in cattle, and he asked him what were the tidings.

Thorhall answered, "A wholesome counsel would I have from thee."

"Little am I meet for that," said Skapti; "but what dost thou stand in need of?"

Thorhall said, "So is the matter grown to be, that but a little while do my shepherds avail me; for ever will they get badly hurt; but others will not serve to the end, and now no one will take the job when he knows what bides in the way."

Skapti answered, "Some evil things shall be there then, since men are more unwilling to watch thy sheep than those of other men. Now, therefore, as thou hast sought rede of me, I shall get thee a shepherd who is hight Glam, a Swede, from Sylgsdale, who came out last summer, a big man and a strong, though he is not much to the mind of most folk."

Thorhall said he heeded that little if he watched the sheep well.

Skapti said that little would be the look out for others, if he could not watch them, despite his strength and daring.

Then Thorhall went out from him, and this was towards the breaking up of the Thing. Thorhall missed two dun horses, and fared himself to seek for them; wherefore folk deem that he was no great man. He went up to Sledgehill, and south along the fell which is called Armansfell; then he saw how a man

fared down from Godi's-wood, and bore faggots on a horse. Soon they met together, and Thorhall asked him of his name. He said that he was called Glam. This man was great of growth, uncouth to look on; his eyes were grey and glaring, and his hair was wolf-grey.

Thorhall stared at him somewhat when he saw this man, till he saw that this was he to whom he had been sent.

"What work hast thou best will to do?" said Thorhall.

Glam said, "That he was of good mind to watch sheep in winter."

"Wilt thou watch my sheep?" said Thorhall. "Skapti has given thee to my will."

"So only shall my service avail thee, if I go of my own will, for I am evil of mood if matters mislike me," quoth Glam.

"I fear no hurt thereof," said Thorhall, "and I will that thou fare to my house."

"That may I do," said Glam, "perchance there are some troubles there?"

"Folk deem the place haunted," said Thorhall.

"Such bugs will not scare me," quoth Glam; "life seems to me less irksome thereby."

"It must needs seem so," said Thorhall, "and truly it is better that a mannikin be not there."

Thereafter they struck bargain together, and Glam is to come at winter nights: then they parted, and Thorhall found his horses even where he had just been searching. Thorhall rode home, and thanked Skapti for his good deed.

Summer slipped away, and Thorhall heard nought of his shepherd, nor did any man know aught about him; but at the appointed time he came to Thorhall-stead. The bonder greeted him well, but none of the other folk could abide him, and the good wife least of all.

Now he took to the sheep-watching, and little trouble it seemed to give him; he was big-voiced and husky, and all the beasts would run together when he whooped. There was a church at Thorhall-stead, but nowise would Glam come therein; he was a loather of church-song, and godless, foul-tempered, and surly, and no man might abide him.

Now passed the time till it came to Yule-eve; then Glam got up and straightway called for his meat. The good wife said

"No Christian man is wont to eat meat this day, be-. cause that on the morrow is the first day of Yule," says she, "wherefore must men first fast to-day."

He answers, "Many follies have ye, whereof I see no good come, nor know I that men fare better now than when they paid no heed to such things; and methinks the ways of men were better when they were called heathens; and now will I have my meat, and none of this fooling."

Then said the housewife, "I know for sure that thou shall fare ill to-day, if thou takest up this evil turn."

Glam bade her bring food straightway, and said that she should fare the worse else. She durst do but as he would, and so when he was full, he went out, growling and grumbling.

Now the weather was such, that mirk was over all, and the snow-flakes drave down, and great din there was, and still all grew much the worse, as the day slipped away.

Men heard the shepherd through the early morning, but less of him as the day wore; then it took to snowing, and by evening there was a great storm; then men went to church, and thus time drew on to nightfall; and Glam came not home; then folk held talk, as to whether search should not be made for him, but, because of the snow-storm and pitch darkness, that came to nought.

Now he came not home on the night of Yule-eve; and thus men abide till after the time of worship; but further on in the day men fared out to the search, and found the sheep scattered wide about in fens, beaten down by the storm, or strayed up into the mountains. Thereafter they came on a great beaten place high up in the valley, and they thought it was as if strong wrestling had gone on there; for that all about the stones had been uptorn and the earth withal; now they looked closely and saw where Glam lay a little way therefrom; he was dead, and as blue as hell, and as great as a neat.

Huge loathing took them, at the sight of him, and they shuddered in their souls at him, yet they strove to bring him to church, but could get him only as far as a certain gil-edge a little way below.

Then they fared home to the farm, and told the bonder what had happed. He asked what was like to have been Glam’s bane. They said they had tracked steps as great as if a cask-bottom had been stamped down, from there where the beaten place was, up to beneath sheer rocks which were high up the valley, and there along went great stains of blood. Now men drew from this, that the evil wight which had been there before had killed Glam, but had got such wounds as had been full enough for him, for of him none has since been ware.

The second day of Yule men went afresh to try to bring Glam to church; drag horses were put to him, but could move him nowhere where they had to go on even ground and not down hill; then folk had to go away therefrom leaving things done so far.

The third day the priest fared with them, and they sought all day, but found not Glam. The priest would go no more on such search, but the herdsman was found whenso the priest was not in their company. Then they let alone striving to bring him to church, and buried him there whereto he had been brought.

A little time after men were ware that Glam lay not quiet. Folk got great hurt therefrom, so that many fell into swoons when they saw him, but others lost their wits thereby. But just after Yule men thought they saw him home at the farm. Folk became exceeding afeard thereat, and many fled there and then. Next Glam took to riding the house-roofs at night, so that he went nigh to breaking them in. Now he walked well-nigh night and day. Hardly durst men fare up into the dale, though they had errands enough there. And much scathe the men of the country-side deemed all this.

Chapter 33

Of the doings of Glam at Thorhall-stead.

In the spring Thorhall got serving-men, and set up house at his farm; then the hauntings began to go off while the sun was at its height; and so things went on to midsummer. That summer a ship came out to Hunawater, wherein was a man named Thorgaut. He was an outlander of kin, big and stout, and two men’s strength he had. He was unhired and single, and would fain do some work, for he was moneyless. Now Thorhall rode to the ship, and asked Thorgaut if he would work for him. Thorgaut said that might be, and moreover that he was not nice about work.

"Be sure in thy mind," said Thorhall, "that mannikins are of small avail there because of the hauntings that have been going on there for one while now; for I will not draw thee on by wiles."

Thorgaut answers, "I deem not myself given up, though I should see some wraithlings; matters will not be light when I am scared, nor will I give up my service for that."

Now they come speedily to a bargain, and Thorgaut is to watch the sheep when winter comes. So the summer wore on, and Thorgaut betook himself to the shepherding at winter nights, and all liked him well. But ever came Glam home and rode the house-roofs; this Thorgaut deemed sport enough, and quoth he

"The thrall must come nigher to scare me."

Thorhall bade him keep silence over that. "Better will it be that ye have no trial together."

Thorgaut said, "Surely all might is shaken out of you, nor shall I drop down betwixt morn and eve at such talk."

Now so things go through the winter till Yule-tide. On Yule eve the shepherd would fare out to his sheep. Then said the good wife

"Need is it that things go not the old way."

He answered, "Have no fear thereof, goodwife; something worth telling of will betide if I come not back."

And thereafter he went to his sheep; and the weather was somewhat cold, and there was much snow. Thorgaut was wont to come home when twilight had set in, and now he came not at that time. Folk went to church as they were wont. Men now thought things looked not unlike what they did before; the bonder would have search made for the shepherd, but the church-goers begged off, and said that they would not give themselves into the hands of trolls by night; so the bonder durst not go, and the search came to nought.

Yule-day, when men were full, they fared out and searched for the shepherd; they first went to Glam’s cairn, because men thought that from his deeds came the loss of the herdsman. But when they came nigh to the cairn, there they saw great tidings, for there they found the shepherd, and his neck was broken, and every bone in him smashed. Then they brought him to church, and no harm came to men from Thorgaut afterwards.

But Glam began afresh to wax mighty; and such deeds he wrought, that all men fled away from Thorhall-stead, except the good man and his goodwife. Now the same neatherd had long been there, and Thorhall would not let him go, because of his good will and safe ward; he was well on in years, and was very loth to fare away, for he saw that all things the bonder had went to nought from not being

watched.

Now after midwinter one morning the housewife fared to the byre to milk the cows after the wonted time; by then was it broad daylight, for none other than the neatherd would trust themselves out before day; but he went out at dawn. She heard great cracking in the byre, with bellowing and roaring; she ran back crying out, and said she knew not what uncouth things were going on in the byre.

The bonder went out and came to the cows, which were goring one another; so he thought it not good to go in there, but went in to the hay-barn. There he saw where lay the neatherd, and had his head in one boose and his feet in the other; and he lay cast on his back. The bonder went up to him, and felt him all over with his hand, and finds soon that he was dead, and the spine of him broken asunder; it had been broken over the raised stone-edge of a boose.

Now the goodman thought there was no abiding there longer; so he fled away from the farm with all that he might take away; but all such live stock as was left behind Glam killed, and then he fared all over the valley and destroyed farms up from Tongue. But Thorhall was with his friends the rest of the winter.

No man might fare up the dale with horse or hound, because straightway it was slain. But when spring came, and the sun-light was the greatest, somewhat the hauntings abated; and now would Thorhall go back to his own land; he had no easy task in getting servants, nathless he set up house again at Thorhall-stead; but all went the same way as before; for when autumn came, the hauntings began to wax again; the bonder's daughter was most set on, and fared so that she died thereof. Many redes were sought, but nought could be done; men thought it like that all Waterdale would be laid waste if nought were found to better this.

Chapter 34

Grettir hears of the Hauntings

Now we take up the story where Grettir Asmundson sat at Biarg through the autumn after they parted, he and Slaying-Bardi at Thoreys-peak; and when the time of winter-nights had well-nigh come, Grettir rode from home north over the neck to Willowdale, and guested at Audunstead; he and Audun made a full peace, and Grettir gave Audun a good axe, and they talked of friendship between them. Audun dwelt long at Audunstead, and was a man of many and hopeful kin; his son was Egil, who married Ulfheid, daughter of Eyulf Gudmundson, and their son was Eyulf, who was slain at the Althing, he was the father of Orm, who was the chaplain of Bishop Thorlak.

Grettir rode north to Waterdale, and came to see his kin at Tongue. In those days dwelt there Jokull, the son of Bard, the mother's brother of Grettir: Jokull was a big man and a strong, and the most violent of men; he was a seafaring man, very wild, and yet a man of great account.

He greeted Grettir well, and he was there three nights. There were so many words about Glam's hauntings, that nought was so much spoken of as of that. Grettir asked closely about all things that had happed. Jokull said that thereof was told no more than the very truth; "And, perchance, thou art wishful to go there, kinsman?"

Grettir said that so it was.

Jokull bade him do it not, "Because it is a great risk for thy good luck, and thy kinsmen have much to hazard where thou art," said he, "for of young men we think there is none such as thou; but from ill cometh ill whereas Glam is; and far better it is to deal with men than with such evil wights."

Grettir said, "That he had a mind to go to Thorhall-stead and see how things went there."

Said Jokull, "Now I see it is of no avail to let thee; but so it is, as men say, Good luck and goodliness are twain."

"Woe is before one’s own door when it is inside one’s neighbour’s; think how it may fare with thyself ere things are ended," said Grettir.

Jokull answered, "Maybe we may both see somewhat of things to come, but neither may help aught herein."

They parted thereafter, and neither thought well of the other’s foretelling.

Chapter 35

Grettir goes to Thorhall-stead, and has to do with Glam

Grettir rode to Thorhall-stead, and the bonder gave him good welcome; he asked whither Grettir was minded to fare, but Grettir said he would be there that night if the bonder would have it so.

Thorhall said that he thanked him therefor, "But few have thought it a treat to guest here for any time; thou must needs have heard what is going on here, and I fain would that thou shouldest have no trouble from me: but though thou shouldest come off whole thyself, that know I for sure, that thou wilt lose thy horse, for none keeps his horse whole who comes here."

Grettir said that horses were to be had in plenty whatsoever might hap to this. Then Thorhall was glad that Grettir was to be there, and gave him a hearty welcome.

Now Grettir’s horse was locked up in a strong house, and they went to sleep; and so the night slipped by, and Glam came not home.

Then said Thorhall, "Things have gone well at thy coming, for every night is Glam wont to ride the house-roofs, or break open doors, as thou mayest well see."

Grettir said, "Then shall one of two things be, either he shall not hold himself back for long, or the hauntings will abate for more than one night; I will bide here another night and see how things fare."

Thereafter they went to Grettir’s horse, and nought had been tried against it; then all seemed to the bonder to go one way.

Now is Grettir there another night, and neither came the thrall home; that the farmer deemed very hopeful; withal he fared to see after Grettir’s horse. When the farmer came there, he found the house broken into, but the horse was dragged out to the door, and every bone in him broken to pieces. Thorhall told Grettir what had happed there, and bade him save himself, "For sure is thy death if thou abidest Glam."

Grettir answered, "I must not have less for my horse than a sight of the thrall."

The bonder said it was no boon to see him, for he was unlike any shape of man; "but good methinks is every hour that thou art here."

Now the day goes by, and when men should go to sleep Grettir would not put off his clothes, but lay down on the seat over against the bonder's lock-bed. He had a drugget cloak over him, and wrapped one skirt of it under his feet, and twined the other under his head, and looked out through the head-opening; a seat-beam was before the seat, a very strong one, and against this he set his feet. The door-fittings were all broken from the outer door, but a wrecked door was now bound thereby, and all was fitted up in the wretchedest wise. The panelling which had been before the seat athwart the hall, was all broken away both above and below the cross-beam; all beds had been torn out of place, and an uncouth place it was.

Light burned in the hall through the night; and when the third part of the night was passed, Grettir heard huge din without, and then one went up upon the houses and rode the hall, and drave his heels against the thatch so that every rafter cracked again.

That went on long, and then he came down from the house and went to the door; and as the door opened, Grettir saw that the thrall stretched in his head, which seemed to him monstrously big, and wondrous thick cut.

Glam fared slowly when he came into the door and stretched himself high up under the roof, and turned looking along the hall, and laid his arms on the tie-beam, and glared inwards over the place. The farmer would not let himself be heard, for he deemed he had had enough in hearing himself what had gone on outside. Grettir lay quiet, and moved no whit; then Glam saw that some bundle lay on the seat, and therewith he stalked up the hall and griped at the wrapper wondrous hard; but Grettir set his foot against the beam, and moved in no wise; Glam pulled again much harder, but still the wrapper moved not at all; the third time he pulled with both hands so hard, that he drew Grettir upright from the seat; and now they tore the wrapper asunder between them.

Glam gazed at the rag he held in his hand, and wondered much who might pull so hard against him; and therewithal Grettir ran under his hands and gripped him round the middle, and bent back his spine as hard as he might, and his mind it was that Glam should shrink thereat; but the thrall lay so hard on Grettir's arms, that he shrank all aback because of Glam's strength.

Then Grettir bore back before him into sundry seats; but the seat-beams were driven out of place, and all was broken that was before them. Glam was fain to get out, but Grettir set his feet against all things that he might; nathless Glam got him dragged from out the hall; there had they a wondrous hard wrestling, because the thrall had a mind to bring him out of the house; but Grettir saw that ill as it was to deal with Glam within doors, yet worse would it be without; therefore he struggled with all his might and main against going out-a-doors.

Now Glam gathered up his strength and knit Grettir towards him when they came to the outer door; but when Grettir saw that he might not set his feet against that, all of a sudden in one rush he drave his hardest against the thrall's breast, and spurned both feet against the half-sunken stone that stood in the threshold of the door; for this the thrall was not ready, for he had been tugging to draw Grettir to him, therefore he reeled aback and spun out against the door, so that his shoulders caught the upper door-case, and the roof burst asunder, both rafters and frozen thatch, and therewith he fell open-armed aback out of the house, and Grettir over him.

Bright moonlight was there without, and the drift was broken, now drawn over the moon, now driven from off her; and, even as Glam fell, a cloud was driven from the moon, and Glam glared up against her. And Grettir himself says that by that sight only was he dismayed amidst all that he ever saw.

Then his soul sank within him so, from all these things both from weariness, and because he had seen Glam turn his eyes so horribly, that he might not draw the short-sword, and lay well-nigh 'twixt home and hell.

But herein was there more fiendish craft in Glam than in most other ghosts, that he spake now in this wise

"Exceeding eagerly hast thou wrought to meet me, Grettir, but no wonder will it be deemed, though thou gettest no good hap of me; and this must I tell thee, that thou now hast got half the strength and manhood, which was thy lot if thou hadst not met me: now I may not take from thee the strength which thou hast got before this; but that may I rule, that thou shalt never be mightier than now thou art; and nathless art thou mighty enow, and that shall many an one learn. Hitherto hast thou earned fame by thy deeds, but henceforth will wrongs and man-slayings fall on thee, and the most part of thy doings will turn to thy woe and ill-hap; an outlaw shalt thou be made, and ever shall it be thy lot to dwell alone abroad; therefore this weird I lay on thee, ever in those days to see these eyes with thine eyes, and thou wilt find it hard to be aloneand that shall drag thee unto death."

Now when the thrall had thus said, the astonishment fell from Grettir that had lain on him, and therewith he drew the short-sword and hewed the head from Glam, and laid it at his thigh.

Then came the farmer out; he had clad himself while Glam had his spell going, but he durst come nowhere nigh till Glam had fallen.

Thorhall praised God therefor, and thanked Grettir well for that he had won this unclean spirit. Then they set to work and burned Glam to cold coals, thereafter they gathered his ashes into the skin of a beast, and dug it down whereas sheep-pastures were fewest, or the ways of men. They walked home thereafter, and by then it had got far on towards day; Grettir laid him down, for he was very stiff: but Thorhall sent to the nearest farm for men, and both showed them and told them how all things had fared.

All men who heard thereof deemed this a deed of great worth, and in those days it was said by all that none in all the land was like to Grettir Asmundson for great heart and prowess.

Thorhall saw off Grettir handsomely, and gave him a good horse and seemly clothes, for those were all torn to pieces that he had worn before; so they parted in friendly wise. Grettir rode thence to the Ridge in Waterdale, and Thorvald received him well, and asked closely about the struggle with Glam. Grettir told him all, and said thereto that he had never had such a trial of strength, so long was their struggle.

Thorvald bade him keep quiet, "Then all will go well with thee, else wilt thou be a man of many troubles."

Grettir said that his temper had been nowise bettered by this, that he was worse to quiet than before, and that he deemed all trouble worse than it was; but that herein he found the greatest change, in that he was become so fearsome a man in the dark, that he durst go nowhither alone after nightfall, for then he seemed to see all kinds of horrors.

And that has fallen since into a proverb, that Glam lends eyes, or gives Glamsight to those who see things nowise as they are.

But Grettir rode home to Biarg when he had done his errands, and sat at home through the winter.

Chapter 36

Of Thorbiorn Oxmain's autumn-feast, and the mocks of Thorbiorn Tardy

Thorbiorn Oxmain held a great autumn feast, and many men came thither to him, and that was while Grettir fared north to Waterdale in the autumn; Thorbiorn the Tardy was there at the feast, and many things were spoken of there. There the Ramfirthers asked of those dealings of Grettir on the neck the summer before.

Thorbiorn Oxmain told the story right fairly as towards Grettir, and said that Kormak would have got the worst of it, if none had come there to part them.

Then spake Thorbiorn the Tardy, "Both these things are true," said he: "I saw Grettir win no great honour, and I deem withal that fear shot through his heart when we came thereto, and right blithe was he to part, nor did I see him seek for vengeance when Atli's house-carle was slain; therefore do I deem that there is no heart in him if he is not holpen enow."

And thereat Thorbiorn went on gabbling at his most; but many put in a word, and said that this was worthless fooling, and that Grettir would not leave things thus, if he heard that talk.

Nought else befell worth telling of at the feast, and men went home; but much ill-will there was betwixt them that winter, though neither set on other; nor were there other tidings through the winter.

Chapter 37

Olaf the Saint, King in Norway; the slaying of Thorbiorn Tardy; Grettir goes to Norway

Early the spring after came out a ship from Norway; and that was before the Thing; these folk knew many things to tell, and first that there was change of rulers in Norway, for Olaf Haraldson was come to be king, and Earl Svein had fled the country in the spring after the fight at Ness. Many noteworthy matters were told of King Olaf, and this withal, that he received such men in the best of ways who were of prowess in any deeds, and that he made such his men.

Thereat were many young men glad, and listed to go abroad, and when Grettir heard the tidings he became much minded to sail out; for he, like others, hoped for honour at the king's hands.

A ship lay in Goose-ere in Eyjafirth, therein Grettir got him a berth and made ready for the voyage, nor had he yet much of faring-goods.

Now Asmund was growing very feeble with eld, and was well-nigh bedridden; he and Asdis had a young son who was called Illugi, and was the hopefullest of men; and, by this time, Atli tended all farming and money-keeping, and this was deemed to better matters, because he was a peaceable and foreseeing man.

Now Grettir went shipward, but in that same ship had Thorbiorn the Tardy taken passage, before folk knew that Grettir would sail therein. Now men would hinder Thorbiorn from sailing in the same ship with Grettir, but Thorbiorn said that he would go for all that. He gat him ready for the voyage out, and was somewhat late thereat, nor did he come to the north to Goose-ere before the ship was ready for sea; and before Thorbiorn fared from the west, Asmund the Greyhaired fell sick and was bedridden.

Now Thorbiorn the Tardy came late one day down to the sand; men were getting ready to go to table, and were washing their hands outside the booths; but when Thorbiorn rode up the lane betwixt the booths, he was greeted, and asked for tidings. He made as if there was nought to tell, "Save that I deem that Asmund, the champion of Biarg, is now dead."

Many men said that there where he went, departed a worthy goodman from the world.

"But what brought it about?" said they.

He answered, "Little went to the death of that champion, for in the chamber smoke was he smothered like a dog; nor is there loss therein, for he was grown a dotard."

"Thou speakest marvellously of such a man," said they, "nor would Grettir like thy words well, if he heard them."

"That must I bear," said Thorbiorn, "and higher must Grettir bear the sword than he did last summer at Ramfirth-neck, if I am to tremble at him."

Now Grettir heard full well what Thorbiorn said, and paid no heed thereto while he let his tale run on; but when he had made an end, then spake Grettir

"That fate I foretell for thee, Tardy," said he, "that thou wilt not die in chamber smoke, yet may be withal thou wilt not die of eld; but it is strangely done to speak scorn of sackless men."

Thorbiorn said, "I have no will to hold in about these things, and methinks thou didst not bear thyself so briskly when we got thee off that time when the men of Meals beat thee like a neat's head."

Then sang Grettir

"Day by day full over long,
Arrow-dealer, grows thy tongue;
Such a man there is, that thou
Mayst be paid for all words now;
Many a man, who has been fain,
Wound-worm's tower with hands to gain,
With less deeds his death has bought,
Than thou, Tardy-one, hast wrought."

Said Thorbiorn, "About as feign do I deem myself as before, despite thy squealing."

Grettir answered, "Heretofore my spaedom has not been long-lived, and so shall things go still; now beware if thou wilt, hereafter will no out-look be left."

Therewith Grettir hewed at Thorbiorn, but he swung up his hand, with the mind to ward the stroke from him, but that stroke came on his arm about the wrist, and withal the short-sword drave into his neck so that the head was smitten off.

Then said the chapmen that he was a man of mighty strokes, and that such should king's men be; and no scathe they deemed it though Thorbiorn were slain, in that he had been both quarrelsome and spiteful.

A little after they sailed into the sea, and came in late summer to Norway, south at Hordaland, and then they heard that King Olaf was north at Drontheim; then Grettir took ship in a trading keel to go north therefrom, because he would fain see the king.

Chapter 38

Of Thorir of Garth and his sons; and how Grettir fetched fire for his shipmates

There was a man named Thorir, who lived at Garth, in Maindale, he was the son of Skeggi, the son of Botulf. Skeggi had settled Well-wharf up to Well-ness; he had to wife Helga, daughter of Thorkel, of Fishbrook; Thorir, his son, was a great chief, and a seafaring man. He had two sons, one called Thorgeir and one Skeggi, they were both hopeful men, and fully grown in those days. Thorir had been in Norway that summer, when King Olaf came east from England, and got into great friendship with the king, and with Bishop Sigurd as well; and this is a token thereof, that Thorir had had a large ship built in the wood, and prayed Bishop Sigurd to hallow it, and so he did. Thereafter Thorir fared out to Iceland and caused the ship to be broken up, when he grew weary of sailing, but the beaks of the ship, he had set up over his outer door, and they were there long afterwards, and were so full of weather wisdom, that the one whistled before a south wind, and the other before a north wind.

But when Thorir knew that King Olaf had got the sole rule over all Norway, he deemed that he had some friendship there to fall back on; then he sent his sons to Norway to meet the king, and was minded that they should become his men. They came there south, late in autumn, and got to themselves a row-barge, and fared north along the land, with the mind to go and meet the king.

They came to a haven south of Stead, and lay there some nights, and kept themselves in good case as to meat and drink, and were not much abroad when the weather was foul.

Now it is to be told that Grettir and his fellows fared north along the land, and often had hard weather, because it was then the beginning of winter; and when they bore down north on Stead, they had much foul weather, with snow and frost, and with exceeding trouble they make land one evening all much worn with wet; so they lay to by a certain dyke, and could thus save their money and goods; the chapmen were hard put to it for the cold, because they could not light any fire, though thereon they deemed well-nigh their life and health lay.

Thus they lay that evening in evil plight; but as the night wore on they saw that a great fire sprang up in the midst of the sound over against there whereas they had come. But when Grettir's shipmates saw the fire, they said one to the other that he would be a happy man who might get it, and they doubted whether they should unmoor the ship, but to all of them there seemed danger in that. Then they had a long talk over it, whether any man was of might enow to fetch that fire.

Grettir gave little heed thereto, but said, that such men had been as would not have feared the task. The chapmen said that they were not bettered by what had been, if now there was nought to take to.

"Perchance thou deemest thyself man enough thereto, Grettir," said they, "since thou art called the man of most prowess among the men of Iceland, and thou wottest well enough what our need is."

Grettir answered, "It seems to me no great deed to fetch the fire, but I wot not if ye will reward it according to the prayer of him who does it."

They said, "Why deemest thou us such shameful men as that we should reward that deed but with good?"

Quoth he, "I may try this if so be that ye think much lies on it, but my mind bids me hope to get nought of good thereby."

They said that that should never be, and bade all hail to his words; and thereafter Grettir made ready for swimming, and cast his clothes from off him; of clothes he had on but a cape and sail-cloth breeches; he girt up the cape and tied a bast-rope strongly round his middle, and had with him a cask; then he leaped overboard; he stretched across the sound, and got aland.

There he saw a house stand, and heard therefrom the talk of men, and much clatter, and therewith he turned toward that house.

Now is it to be said of those that were there before, that here were come the sons of Thorir, as is aforesaid; they had lain there many nights, and bided there the falling of the gale, that they might have wind at will to go north, beyond Stead. They had set them down a-drinking, and were twelve men in all; their ship rode in the main haven, and they were at a house of refuge for such men to guest in, as went along the coast.

Much straw had been borne into the house, and there was a great fire on the floor; Grettir burst into the house, and wotted not who was there before; his cape was all over ice when he came aland, and he himself was wondrous great to behold, even as a troll; now those first comers were exceeding amazed at him, and deemed he must be some evil wight; they smote at him with all things they might lay hold of, and mighty din went on around them; but Grettir put off all blows strongly with his arms, then some smote him with fire-brands, and the fire burst off over all the house, and therewith he got off with the fire and fared back again to his fellows.

They mightily praised his journey and the prowess of it, and said that his like would never be. And now the night wore, and they deemed themselves happy in that they had got the fire.

The next morning the weather was fair; the chapmen woke early and got them ready to depart, and they talked together that now they should meet those who had had the rule of that fire, and wot who they were.

Now they unmoored their ship, and crossed over the sound; there they found no hall, but saw a great heap of ashes, and found therein many bones of men; then they deemed that this house of refuge had been utterly burned up, with all those men who had been therein.

Thereat they asked if Grettir had brought about that ill-hap, and said that it was the greatest misdeed.

Grettir said, that now had come to pass even as he had misdoubted, that they should reward him ill for the fetching of the fire, and that it was ill to help unmanly men.

Grettir got such hurt of this, that the chapmen said, wheresoever they came, that Grettir had burned those men. The news soon got abroad that in that house were lost the aforenamed sons of Thorir of Garth, and their fellows; then they drave Grettir from their ship and would not have him with them; and now he became so ill looked on that scarce any one would do good to him.

Now he deemed that matters were utterly hopeless, but before all things would go to meet the king, and so made north to Drontheim. The king was there before him, and knew all or ever Grettir came there, who had been much slandered to the king. And Grettir was some days in the town before he could get to meet the king.

Chapter 39

How Grettir would fain bear Iron before the King

Now on a day when the king sat in council, Grettir went before the king and greeted him well. The king looked at him and said, "Art thou Grettir the Strong?"

He answered, "So have I been called, and for that cause am I come to thee, that I hope from thee deliverance from the evil tale that is laid on me, though I deem that I nowise wrought that deed."

King Olaf said, "Thou art great enough, but I know not what luck thou mayest bear about to cast off this matter from thee; but it is like, indeed, that thou didst not willingly burn the men."

Grettir said he was fain to put from him this slander, if the king thought he might do so; the king bade him tell truthfully, how it had gone betwixt him and those men: Grettir told him all, even as has been said before, and this withal, that they were all alive when he came out with the fire

"And now I will offer to free myself in such wise as ye may deem will stand good in law therefor."

Olaf the king said, "We will grant thee to bear iron for this matter if thy luck will have it so."

Grettir liked this exceeding well; and now took to fasting for the iron; and so the time wore on till the day came whereas the trial should come off; then went the king to the church, and the bishop and much folk, for many were eager to have a sight of Grettir, so much as had been told of him.

Then was Grettir led to the church, and when he came thither, many of those who were there before gazed at him and said one to the other, that he was little like to most folk, because of his strength and greatness of growth.

Now, as Grettir went up the church-floor, there started up a lad of ripe growth, wondrous wild of look, and he said to Grettir

"Marvellous is now the custom in this land, as men are called Christians therein, that ill-doers, and folk riotous, and thieves shall go their ways in peace and become free by trials; yea, and what would the evil man do but save his life while he might? So here now is a misdoer, proven clearly a man of misdeeds, and has burnt sackless men withal, and yet shall he, too, have a trial to free him; ah, a mighty ill custom!"

Therewith he went up to Grettir and pointed finger, and wagged head at him, and called him mermaid’s son, and many other ill names.

Grettir grew wroth beyond measure hereat, and could not keep himself in; he lifted up his fist, and smote the lad under the ear, so that forthwith he fell down stunned, but some say that he was slain there and then. None seemed to know whence that lad came or what became of him, but men are mostly minded to think, that it was some unclean spirit, sent thither for Grettir's hurt.

Now a great clamour rose in the church, and it was told the king, "He who should bear the iron is smiting all about him;" then King Olaf went down the church, and saw what was going on, and spake

"A most unlucky man art thou," said he, "that now the trial should not be, as ready as all things were thereto, nor will it be easy to deal with thine ill-luck."

Grettir answered, "I was minded that I should have gained more honour from thee, Lord, for the sake of my kin, than now seems like to be;" and he told withal how men were faring to King Olaf, as was said afore, "and now I am fain," said he, "that thou wouldest take me to thee; thou hast here many men with thee, who will not be deemed more like men-at-arms than I?"

"That see I well," said the king, "that few men are like unto thee for strength and stoutness of heart, but thou art far too luckless a man to abide with us: now shall thou go in peace for me, wheresoever thou wilt, the winter long, but next summer go thou out to Iceland, for there will it be thy fate to leave thy bones."

Grettir answered, "First would I put from me this affair of the burning, if I might, for I did not the deed willingly."

"It is most like," said the king; "but yet, because the trial is now come to nought for thy heedlessness' sake, thou will not get this charge cast from thee more than now it is, For ill-heed still to ill doth lead, and if ever man has been cursed, of all men must thou have been."

So Grettir dwelt a while in the town thereafter, but dealt no more with the king than has been told.

Then he fared into the south country, and was minded east for Tunsberg, to find Thorstein Dromond, his brother, and there is nought told of his travels till he came east to Jadar.

Chapter 40

Of Grettir and Snoekoll

At yule came Grettir to a bonder who was called Einar, he was a rich man, and was married and had one daughter of marriageable age, who was called Gyrid; she was a fair woman, and was deemed a right good match; Einar bade Grettir abide with him through Yule, and that proffer he took.

Then was it the wont far and wide in Norway that woodmen and misdoers would break out of the woods and challenge men for their women, or they took away men's goods with violence, whereas they had not much help of men.

Now it so befell here, that one day in Yule there came to Einar the bonder many ill-doers together, and he was called Snoekoll who was the head of them, and a great bearserk he was. He challenged goodman Einar to give up his daughter, or to defend her, if he thought himself man enough thereto; but the bonder was then past his youth, and was no man for fighting; he deemed he had a great trouble on his hands, and asked Grettir, in a whisper, what rede he would give thereto: "Since thou art called a famous man." Grettir bade him say yea to those things alone, which he thought of no shame to him.

The bearserk sat on his horse, and had a helm on his head, but the cheek-pieces were not made fast; he had an iron-rimmed shield before him, and went on in the most monstrous wise.

Now he said to the bonder, "Make one or other choice speedily, or what counsel is that big churl giving thee who stands there before thee; is it not so that he will play with me?"

Grettir said, "We are about equal herein, the bonder and I, for neither of us is skilled in arms."

Snoekoll said, "Ye will both of you be somewhat afraid to deal with me, if I grow wroth."

"That is known when it is tried," said Grettir.

Now the bearserk saw that there was some edging out of the matter going on, and he began to roar aloud, and bit the rim of his shield, and thrust it up into his mouth, and gaped over the corner of the shield, and went on very madly. Grettir took a sweep along over the field, and when he came alongside of the bearserk's horse, sent up his foot under the tail of the shield so hard, that the shield went up into the mouth of him, and his throat was riven asunder, and his jaws fell down on his breast. Then he wrought so that, all in one rush, he caught hold of the helmet with his left hand, and swept the viking off his horse; and with the other hand drew the short-sword that he was girt withal, and drave it at his neck, so that off the head flew. But when Snoekoll's fellows saw that, they fled, each his own way, and Grettir had no mind to follow, for he saw there was no heart in them.

The bonder thanked him well for his work and many other men too; and that deed was deemed to have been wrought both swiftly and hardily.

Grettir was there through Yule, and the farmer saw him off handsomely: then he went east to Tunsberg, and met his brother Thorstein; he received Grettir fondly, and asked of his travels and how he won the bearserk. Then Grettir sang a stave

"There the shield that men doth save
Mighty spurn with foot I gave.
Snoekoll's throat it smote aright,
The fierce follower of the fight,
And by mighty dint of it
Were the tofts of tooth-hedge split;
The strong spear-walk's iron rim,
Tore adown the jaws of him."

Thorstein said, "Deft wouldst thou be at many things, kinsman, if mishaps went not therewith."

Grettir answered, "Deeds done will be told of."

Chapter 41

Of Thorstein Dromond's Arms, and what he deemed they might do

Now Grettir was with Thorstein for the rest of the winter and on into the spring; and it befell one morning, as those brothers, Thorstein and Grettir, lay in their sleeping-loft, that Grettir had laid his arms outside the bed-clothes; and Thorstein was awake and saw it. Now Grettir woke up a little after, and then spake Thorstein:

"I have seen thine arms, kinsman," said he, "and I deem it nowise wonderful, though thy strokes fall heavy on many, for no man's arms have I seen like thine."

"Thou mayst know well enough," said Grettir, "that I should not have brought such things to pass as I have wrought, if I were not well knit."

"Better should I deem it," said Thorstein, "if they were slenderer and somewhat luckier withal."

Grettir said, "True it is, as folk say, No man makes himself; but let me see thine arms," said he.

Thorstein did so; he was the longest and gauntest of men; and Grettir laughed, and said,

"No need to look at that longer; hooked together are the ribs in thee; nor, methinks, have I ever seen such tongs as thou bearest about, and I deem thee to be scarce of a woman's strength."

"That may be," said Thorstein; "yet shall thou know that these same thin arms shall avenge thee, else shall thou never be avenged; who may know what shall be, when all is over and done?"

No more is told of their talk together; the spring wore on, and Grettir took ship in the summer. The brothers parted in friendship, and saw each other never after.

Chapter 42

Of the Death of Asmund the Grey haired

Now must the tale be taken up where it was left before, for Thorbiorn Oxmain heard how Thorbiorn Tardy was slain, as aforesaid, and broke out into great wrath, and said it would please him well that now this and now that should have strokes in his garth

Asmund the Greyhaired lay long sick that summer, and when he thought his ailings drew closer on him, he called to him his kin, and said that it was his will, that Atli should have charge of all his goods after his day.

"But my mind misgives me," said Asmund, "that thou mayst scarce sit quiet because of the iniquity of men, and I would that all ye of my kin should help him to the uttermost but of Grettir nought can I say, for methinks overmuch on a whirling wheel his life turns; and though he be a mighty man, yet I fear me that he will have to heed his own troubles more than the helping of his kin: but Illugi, though he be young, yet shall he become a man of prowess, if he keep himself whole."

So, when Asmund had settled matters about his sons as he would, his sickness lay hard on him, and in a little while he died, and was laid in earth at Biarg; for there had he let make a church; but his death his neighbours deemed a great loss.

Now Atli became a mighty bonder, and had many with him, and was a great gatherer of household-stuff. When the summer was far gone, he went out to Snowfellness to get him stockfish. He drave many horses, and rode from home to Meals in Ramfirth to Gamli his brother-in-law; and on this journey rode with him Grim Thorhallson, Gamli's brother, and another man withal. They rode west to Hawkdale Pass, and so on, as the road lay west to Ness: there they bought much stockfish, and loaded seven horses therewith, and turned homeward when they were ready.

Chapter 43

The Onset on Atli at the Pass and the Slaying of Gunnar and Thorgeir

Thorbiorn Oxmain heard that Atli and Grim were on a journey from home, and there were with him the sons of Thorir from the Pass, Gunnar and Thorgeir. Now Thorbiorn envied Atli for his many friendships, and therefore he egged on the two brothers, the sons of Thorir, to way-lay Atli as he came back from the outer ness. Then they rode home to the Pass, and abode there till Atli and his fellows went by with their train; but when they came as far as the homestead at the Pass, their riding was seen, and those brothers brake out swiftly with their house-carles and rode after them; but when Atli and his folk saw their faring, Atli bade them take the loads from the horses, "for perchance they will give me atonement for my house-carle, whom Gunnar slew last summer. Let us not begin the work, but defend ourselves if they be first to raise strife with us."

Now the brothers came up and leaped off their horses. Atli welcomed them, and asked for tidings: "Perchance, Gunnar, thou wilt give me some atonement for my house-carle."

Gunnar answered, "Something else is your due, men of Biarg, than that I should lay down aught good therefor; yea, atonement is due withal for the slaying of Thorbiorn, whom Grettir slew."

"It is not for me to answer thereto," said Atli; "nor art thou a suitor in that case."

Gunnar said he would stand in that stead none-the-less. "Come, let us set on them, and make much of it, that Grettir is not nigh them now."

Then they ran at Atli, eight of them altogether, but Atli and his folk were six.

Atli went before his men, and drew the sword, Jokul’s gift, which Grettir had given him.

Then said Thorgeir, "Many like ways have those who deem themselves good; high aloft did Grettir bear his short-sword last summer on the Ramfirth-neck."

Atli answered, "Yea, he is more wont to deal in great deeds than I."

Thereafter they fought; Gunnar set on Atli exceeding fiercely, and was of the maddest; and when they had fought awhile, Atli said,

"No fame there is in thus killing workmen each for the other; more seeming it is that we ourselves play together, for never have I fought with weapons till now."

Gunnar would not have it so, but Atli bade his house-carles look to the burdens; "But I will see what these will do herein."

Then he went forward so mightily that Gunnar and his folk shrunk back before him, and he slew two of the men of those brothers, and thereafter turned to meet Gunnar, and smote at him, so that the shield was cleft asunder almost below the handle, and the stroke fell on his leg below the knee, and then he smote at him again, and that was his bane.

Now is it to be told of Grim Thorhallson that he went against Thorgeir, and they strove together long, for each was a hardy man. Thorgeir saw the fall of his brother Gunnar, and was fain to draw off. Grim ran after him, and followed him till Thorgeir stumbled, and fell face foremost; then Grim smote at him with an axe betwixt the shoulders, so that it stood deep sunken therein.

Then they gave peace to three of their followers who were left; and thereafter they bound up their wounds, and laid the burdens on the horses, and then fared home, and made these man-slayings known.

Atli sat at home with many men through the winter. Thorbiorn Oxmain took these doings exceedingly ill, but could do naught therein because Atli was a man well befriended. Grim was with him through the winter, and Gamli, his brother-in-law; and there was Glum, son of Uspak, another kinsman-in-law of his, who at that time dwelt at Ere in Bitra. They had many men dwelling at Biarg, and great mirth was thereat through the winter.

Chapter 44

The Suit for the Slaying of the Sons of Thorir of the Pass

Thorbiorn Oxmain took on himself the suit for the slaying of the sons of Thorir of the Pass. He made ready a suit against Grim and Atli, but they set forth for their defence onset and attack, to make those brothers fall unatoned. The suit was brought to the Hunawater Thing, and men came thronging to both sides. Atli had good help because he was exceeding strong of kin.

Now the friends of both stood forth and talked of peace, and all said that Atli's ways were good, a peaceful man, but stout in danger none-the-less.

Now Thorbiorn deemed that by nought would his honour be served better than by taking the peace offered. Atli laid down before-hand that he would have neither district outlawry nor banishment.

Then were men chosen for the judges. Thorvald, son of Asgeir, on Atli's side, and on Thorbiorn's, Solvi the Proud, who was the son of Asbrand, the son of Thorbrand, the son of Harald Ring, who had settled all Waterness from the Foreland up to Bond-maids River on the west, but on the east all up to Cross-river, and there right across to Berg-ridge, and all on that side of the Bergs down to the sea: this Solvi was a man of great stateliness and a wise man, therefore Thorbiorn chose him to be judge on his behoof.

Now they set forth their judgment, that half-fines should be paid for the sons of Thorir, but half fell away because of the onslaught and attack, and attempt on Atli's life, the slaying of Atli's house-carle, who was slain on Ramfirth-neck, and the slaying of those twain who fell with the sons of Thorir were set off one against the other. Grim Thorhallson should leave dwelling in the district, but Atli alone should pay the money atonement.

This peace pleased Atli much, but Thorbiorn misliked it, but they parted appeased, as far as words went; howsoever it fell from Thorbiorn that their dealings would not be made an end of yet, if things went as he would.

But Atli rode home from the Thing, and thanked Thorvald well for his aid. Grim Thorhallson went south to Burgfirth, and dwelt at Gilsbank, and was a great bonder.

Chapter 45

Of the Slaying of Atli Asmundson

There was a man with Thorbiorn Oxmain who was called Ali; he was a house-carle, a somewhat lazy and unruly man.

Thorbiorn bade him work better, or he would beat him. Ali said he had no list thereto, and was beyond measure worrying. Thorbiorn would not abide it, and drave him under him, and handled him hardly. Then Ali went off from his service, and fared over the Neck to Midfirth, and made no stay till he came to Biarg. Atli was at home, and asked whither he went. He said that he sought service.

"Art thou not Thorbiorn's workman?" said Atli.

"That did not go off so pleasantly," said Ali; "I was not there long, and evil I deemed it while I was there, and we parted, so that I deemed his song about my throat nowise sweet; and I will go to dwell there no more, whatso else may hap to me; and true it is that much unlike ye are in the luck ye have with servants, and now I would fain work with thee if I might have the choice."

Atli answered, "Enough I have of workmen, though I reach not out to Thorbiorn's hands for such men as he has hired, and methinks there is no gain in thee, so go back to him."

Ali said, "Thither I go not of my own free-will."

And now he dwells there awhile; but one morning he went out to work with Atli's house-carles, and worked so that his hands were everywhere, and thus he went on till far into summer. Atli said nought to him, but bade give him meat, for he liked his working well.

Now Thorbiorn hears that Ali is at Biarg; then he rode to Biarg with two men, and called out Atli to talk with him. Atli went out and welcomed him.

Thorbiorn said, "Still wilt thou take up afresh ill-will against me, and trouble me, Atli. Why hast thou taken my workman? Wrongfully is this done."

Atli answered, "It is not proven to me that he is thy workman, nor will I withhold him from thee, if thou showest proofs thereof, yet am I loth to drag him out of my house."

"Thou must have thy will now," said Thorbiorn; "but I claim the man, and forbid him to work here; and I will come again another time, and I know not if we shall then part better friends than now."

Atli said, "I shall abide at home, and take what may come to hand."

Then Thorbiorn rode home; but when the workmen come home in the evening, Atli tells all the talk betwixt him and Thorbiorn, and bids Ali go his way, and said he should not abide there longer.

Ali answered, "True is the old saw, over-praised and first to fail. I deemed not that thou wouldst drive me away after I had toiled here all the summer enough to break my heart, and I hoped that thou wouldst stand up for me somehow; but this is the way of you, though ye look as if good might be hoped from you. I shall be beaten here before thine eyes if thou givest me not some defence or help."

Atli altered his mind at this talk of his, and had no heart now to drive him away from him.

Now the time wore, till men began hay-harvest, and one day, somewhat before midsummer, Thorbiorn Oxmain rode to Biarg, he was so attired that he had a helm on his head, and was girt with a sword, and had a spear in his hand. A barbed spear it was, and the barbs were broad.

It was wet abroad that day. Atli had sent his house-carles to the mowing, but some of them were north at Horn a-fishing. Atli was at home, and few other men.

Thorbiorn came there about high-noon; alone he was, and rode up to the outer door; the door was locked, and no men were abroad. Thorbiorn smote on the door, and then drew aback behind the houses, so that none might see him from the door. The home-folk heard that the door was knocked at, and a woman went out. Thorbiorn had an inkling of the woman, and would not let himself be seen, for he had a mind to do something else.

Now the woman went into the chamber, and Atli asked who was come there. She said, "I have seen nought stirring abroad." And even as they spake Thorbiorn let drive a great stroke on the door.

Then said Atli, "This one would see me, and he must have some errand with me, whatever may be the gain thereof to me."

Then he went forth and out of the door, and saw no one without. Exceeding wet it was, therefore he went not out, but laid a hand on either door-post, and so peered about him.

In that point of time Thorbiorn swung round before the door, and thrust the spear with both hands amidst of Atli, so that it pierced him through.

Then said Atli, when he got the thrust, "Broad spears are about now," says he, and fell forward over the threshold.

Then came out women who had been in the chamber, and saw that Atli was dead. By then was Thorbiorn on horseback, and he gave out the slaying as having been done by his hand, and thereafter rode home.

The goodwife Asdis sent for her men, and Atli’s corpse was laid out, and he was buried beside his father. Great mourning folk made for his death, for he had been a wise man, and of many friends.

No weregild came for the slaying of Atli, nor did any claim atonement for him, because Grettir had the blood-suit to take up if he should come out; so these matters stood still for that summer. Thorbiorn was little thanked for that deed of his; but he sat at peace in his homestead.

Chapter 46

Grettir outlawed at the Thing at the Suit of Thorir of Garth

This summer, whereof the tale was telling e’en now, a ship came out to Goose-ere before the Thing. Then was the news told of Grettir’s travels, and therewithal men spake of that house-burning; and at that story was Thorir of Garth mad wroth, and deemed that there whereas Grettir was he had to look for vengeance for his sons. He rode with many men and set forth at the Thing the case for the burning, but men deemed they knew nought to say therein, while there was none to answer.

Thorir said that he would have nought, but that Grettir should be made an outlaw throughout the land for such misdeeds.

Then answered Skapti the Lawman, "Surely an ill deed it is, if things are as is said; but a tale is half told if one man tells it, for most folk are readiest to bring their stories to the worser side when there are two ways of telling them; now, therefore, I shall not give my word that Grettir be made guilty for this that has been done."

Now Thorir was a man of might in his district and a great chief, and well befriended of many great men; and he pushed on matters so hard that nought could avail to acquit Grettir; and so this Thorir made Grettir an outlaw throughout all the land, and was ever thenceforth the heaviest of all his foes, as things would oft show.

Now he put a price on his head, as was wont to be done with other wood-folk, and thereafter rode home.

Many men got saying that this was done rather by the high hand than according to law; but so it stood as it was done; and now nought else happed to tell of till past midsummer.

Chapter 47

Grettir comes out to Iceland again

When summer was far spent came Grettir Asmundson out to Whiteriver in Burgfirth; folk went down to the ship from thereabout, and these tidings came all at once to Grettir; the first, that his father was dead, the second, that his brother was slain, the third, that he himself was made an outlaw throughout all the land. Then sang Grettir this stave:

"Heavy tidings thick and fast
On the singer now are cast;
My father dead, my brother dead,
A price set upon my head;
Yet, O grove of Hedin’s maid,
May these things one day be paid;
Yea upon another morn
Others may be more forlorn."

So men say that Grettir changed nowise at these tidings, but was even as merry as before.

Now he abode with the ship awhile, because he could get no horse to his mind. But there was a man called Svein, who dwelt at Bank up from Thingness, he was a good bonder and a merry man, and often sang such songs as were gamesome to hear; he had a mare black to behold, the swiftest of all horses, and her Svein called Saddle-fair.

Now Grettir went one night away from the wolds, but he would not that the chapmen should be ware of his ways; he got a black cape, and threw it over his clothes, and so was disguised; he went up past Thingness, and so up to Bank, and by then it was daylight. He saw a black horse in the homefield and went up to it, and laid bridle on it, leapt on the back of it, and rode up along Whiteriver, and below Bye up to Flokedale-river, and then up the tracks above Kalfness; the workmen at Bank got up now and told the bonder of the man who had got on his mare; he got up and laughed, and sang

"One that helm-fire well can wield
Rode off from my well-fenced field,
Helm-stalk stole away from me
Saddle-fair, the swift to see;
Certes, more great deeds this Frey
Yet shall do in such-like way
As this was done; I deem him then
Most overbold and rash of men."

Then he took horse and rode after him; Grettir rode on till he came up to the homestead at Kropp; there he met a man called Hall, who said that he was going down to the ship at the Wolds; Grettir sang a stave

"In broad-peopled lands say thou
That thou sawest even now
Unto Kropp-farm’s gate anigh,
Saddle-fair and Elm-stalk high;
That thou sawest stiff on steed
(Get thee gone at greatest speed),
One who loveth game and play
Clad in cape of black to-day."

Then they part, and Hall went down the track and all the way down to Kalfness, before Svein met him; they greeted one another hastily, then sang Svein

"Sawest thou him who did me harm
On my horse by yonder farm?
Even such an one was he,
Sluggish yet a thief to see;
From the neighbours presently
Doom of thief shall he abye
And a blue skin shall he wear,
If his back I come anear."

"That thou mayst yet do," said Hall, "I saw that man who said that he rode on Saddle-fair, and bade me tell it over the peopled lands and settlements; great of growth he was, and was clad in a black cape."

"He deems he has something to fall back on," said the bonder, "but I shall ride after him and find out who he is."

Now Grettir came to Deildar-Tongue, and there was a woman without the door; Grettir went up to talk to her, and sang this stave

"Say to guard of deep-sea’s flame
That here worm-land’s haunter came;
Well-born goddess of red gold,
Thus let gamesome rhyme be told.
’Giver forth of Odin’s mead
Of thy black mare have I need;
For to Gilsbank will I ride,
Meed of my rash words to bide.’"

The woman learned this song, and thereafter Grettir rode on his way; Svein came there a little after, and she was not yet gone in, and as he came he sang this

"What foreteller of spear-shower
E'en within this nigh-passed hour,
Swift through the rough weather rode
Past the gate of this abode?
He, the hound-eyed reckless one,
By all good deeds left alone,
Surely long upon this day
From my hands will flee away."

Then she told him what she had been bidden to; he thought over the ditty, and said, "It is not unlike that he will be no man to play with; natheless, I will find him out."

Now he rode along the peopled lands, and each man ever saw the other's riding; and the weather was both squally and wet.

Grettir came to Gilsbank that day, and when Grim Thorhallson knew thereof, he welcomed him with great joy, and bade him abide with him. This Grettir agreed to; then he let loose Saddle-fair, and told Grim how she had been come by. Therewith came Svein, and leapt from his horse, and saw his own mare, and sang this withal

"Who rode on my mare away?
What is that which thou wilt pay?
Who a greater theft has seen?
What does the cowl-covered mean?"

Grettir by then had doft his wet clothes, and he heard the stave, and answered

"I did ride thy mare to Grim
(Thou art feeble weighed with him),
Little will I pay to thee,
Yet good fellows let us be."

"Well, so be it then," said the farmer, "and the ride is well paid for."

Then each sang his own songs, and Grettir said he had no fault to find, though he failed to hold his own; the bonder was there that night, and the twain of them together, and great game they made of this: and they called all this Saddle-fair's lays. Next morning the bonder rode home, and he and Grettir parted good friends.

Now Grim told Grettir of many things from the north and Midfirth, that had befallen while he was abroad, and this withal, that Atli was unatoned, and how that Thorbiorn Oxmain waxed so great, and was so high-handed, that it was not sure that goodwife Asdis might abide at Biarg if matters still went so.

Grettir abode but few nights with Grim, for he was fain that no news should go before him north over the Heaths. Grim bade him come thither if he should have any need of safeguard.

"Yet shall I shun being made guilty in law for the harbouring of thee."

Grettir said he did well. "But it is more like that later on I may need thy good deed more."

Now Grettir rode north over Twodaysway, and so to Biarg, and came there in the dead of night, when all folk were asleep save his mother. He went in by the back of the house and through a door that was there, for the ways of the house were well known to him, and came to the hall, and got to his mother's bed, and groped about before him.

She asked who was there, and Grettir told her; then she sat up and kissed him, and sighed withal, heavily, and spake, "Be welcome; son," she said, "but my joyance in my sons is slipping from me; for he is slain who was of most avail, and thou art made an outlaw and a guilty man, and the third is so young; that he may do nought for me."

"An old saw it is," said Grettir, "Even so shall bale be bettered, by biding greater bale; but there are more things to be thought of by men than money atonements alone, and most like it is that Atli will be avenged; but as to things that may fall to me, many must even take their lot at my hand in dealing with me, and like it as they may."

She said that was not unlike. And now Grettir was there a while with the knowledge of few folk; and he had news of the doings of the folk of the country-side; and men knew not that Grettir was come into Midfirth: but he heard that Thorbiorn Oxmain was at home with few men; and that was after the homefield hay-harvest.

Chapter 48

The Slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain

On a fair day Grettir rode west over the Necks to Thorodstead, and came there about noon, and knocked at the door; women came out and welcomed him, but knew him not; he asked for Thorbiorn, but they said he was gone to the meadow to bind hay, and with him his son of sixteen winters, who was called Arnor; for Thorbiorn was a very busy man, and well-nigh never idle.

So when Grettir knew this, he bade them well betide, and went his way on the road toward Reeks, there a marsh stretches down from the hill-side, and on it was much grass to mow, and much hay had Thorbiorn made there, and now it was fully dry, and he was minded to bind it up for home, he and the lad with him, but a woman did the raking.

Now Grettir rode from below up into the field, but the father and son were higher up, and had bound one load, and were now at another; Thorbiorn had set his shield and sword against the load, and the lad had a hand-axe beside him.

Now Thorbiorn saw a man coming, and said to the lad, "Yonder is a man riding toward us, let us leave binding the hay, and know what he will with us."

So did they, and Grettir leapt off his horse; he had a helm on his head, and was girt with the short-sword, and bore a great spear in his hand, a spear without barbs, and the socket inlaid with silver. Now he sat down and knocked out the socket-nail, because he would not that Thorbiorn should cast the spear back.

Then said Thorbiorn, "He is a big man, and no man in field know I, if that is not Grettir Asmundson, and he must needs think he has enough against us; so let us meet him sharply, and let him see no signs of failing in us. We shall deal cunningly; for I will go against him in front, and take thou heed how matters go betwixt us, for I will trust myself against any man if I have one alone to meet; but do thou go behind him, and drive the axe at him with both hands atwixt his shoulders; thou needest not fear that he will do thee hurt, as his back will be turned to thee."

Neither Thorbiorn nor his son had a helm.

Now Grettir got into the mead, and when he came within spear-throw of them, he cast his spear at Thorbiorn, but the head was looser on the shaft than he deemed it would be, and it swerved in its flight, and fell down from the shaft to the earth: then Thorbiorn took his shield, and put it before him, but drew his sword and went against Grettir when he knew him; then Grettir drew his short-sword, and turned about somewhat, so that he saw how the lad stood at his back, wherefore he kept himself free to move here or there, till he saw that the lad was come within reach of him, and therewith he raised the short-sword high aloft, and sent it back against Arnor’s head so mightily that the skull was shattered, and that was his bane. Then Thorbiorn ran against Grettir and smote at him, but he thrust forth his buckler with his left hand, and put the blow from him, and smote with the short-sword withal, and cleft the shield of Thorbiorn, and the short-sword smote so hard into his head that it went even unto the brain, and he fell dead to earth beneath that stroke, nor did Grettir give him any other wound.

Then he sought for his spear-head, and found it not; so he went to his horse and rode out to Reeks, and there told of the slayings. Withal the woman who was in the meadow saw the slayings, and ran home full of fear, and said that Thorbiorn was slain, and his son both; this took those of the house utterly unawares, for they knew nought of Grettir’s travelling. So were men sent for to the next homestead, and soon came many folk, and brought the bodies to church. Thorod Drapa-Stump took up the blood-suit for these slayings and had folk a-field forthwith.

But Grettir rode home to Biarg, and found his mother, and told her what had happed; and she was glad thereat, and said that now he got to be like unto the Waterdale kin. "Yet will this be the root and stem of thine outlawry, and I know for sooth that thou mayest not abide here long because of the kin of Thorbiorn; but now may they know that thou mayest be angered."

Grettir sang this stave thereupon

"Giant’s friend fell dead to earth
On the grass of Wetherfirth,
No fierce fighting would avail,
Oxmain in the Odin’s gale.
So, and in no other wise,
Has been paid a fitting price
For that Atli, who of yore,
Lay dead-slain anigh his door."

Goodwife Asdis said that was true; "But I know not what rede thou art minded to take?"

Grettir said that he would seek help of his friends and kin in the west; "But on thee shall no trouble fall for my sake," said he.

So he made ready to go, and mother and son parted in love; but first he went to Meals in Ramfirth, and told Gamli his brother-in-law all, even as it had happed, concerning the slaying of Thorbiorn.

Gamli told him he must needs depart from Ramfirth while Thorbiorn’s kin had their folk about; "But our aid in the suit for Atli’s slaying we shall yield thee as we may."

So thereafter Grettir rode west over Laxdale-heath, and stayed not till he came to Liarskogar to Thorstein Kuggson, where he dwelt long that autumn.

Chapter 49

The gathering to avenge Thorbiorn Oxmain

Thorod Drapa-Stump sought tidings of this who might have slain Thorbiorn and his son, and when he came to Reeks, it was told him that Grettir had been there and given out the slayings as from his hand. Now, Thorod deemed he saw how things had come to pass; so he went to Biarg, and there found many folk, but he asked if Grettir were there.

The goodwife said he had ridden away, and that she would not slip him into hiding-places if he were there.

"Now ye will be well pleased that matters have so been wrought; nor was the slaying of Atli over-avenged, though this was paid for it. Ye asked not then what grief of heart I had; and now, too, it is well that things are even so."

Therewith they rode home, and found it not easy to do aught therein.

Now that spear-head which Grettir lost was not found till within the memory of men living now; it was found in the latter days of Sturla Thordson the lawman, and in that marsh where Thorbiorn fell, which is now called Spear-mead; and that sign men have to show that Thorbiorn was slain there, though in some places it is said that he was slain on Midfit.

Thorod and his kin heard that Grettir abode at Liarskogar; then they gathered men, and were minded to go thither; but when Gamli of Meals was ware thereof, he made Thorstein and Grettir sure of the farings of the Ramfirthers; and when Thorstein knew it, he sent Grettir in to Tongue to Snorri Godi, for then there was no strife between them, and Thorstein gave that counsel to Grettir that he should pray Snorri the Godi for his watch and ward; but if he would not grant it, he made Grettir go west to Reek-knolls to Thorgils Arisen, "and he will take thee to him through this winter, and keep within the Westfirths till these matters are settled."

Grettir said he would take good heed to his counsels; then he rode into Tongue, and found Snorri the Godi, and talked with him, and prayed him to take him in.

Snorri answered, "I grow an old man now, and loth am I to harbour outlawed men if no need drive me thereto. What has come to pass that the elder put thee off from him?"

Grettir said that Thorstein had often done well to him; "But more shall I need than him alone, if things are to go well."

Said Snorri, "My good word I shall put in for thee if that may avail thee aught, but in some other place than with me must thou seek a dwelling."

With these words they parted, and Grettir turned west to Reekness; the Ramfirthers with their band got as far as Samstead, and there they heard that Grettir had departed from Liarskogar, and thereat they went back home.

Chapter 50

Grettir and the Foster-brothers at Reek-knolls

Now Grettir came to Reek-knolls about winter-nights, and prayed Thorgils for winter abode; Thorgils said, that for him as for other free men meat was ready; "but the fare of guests here is nowise choice." Grettir said he was not nice about that.

"There is yet another thing here for thy trouble," said Thorgils: "Men are minded to harbour here, who are deemed somewhat hard to keep quiet, even as those foster-brothers, Thorgeir and Thormod; I wot not how meet it may be for you to be together; but their dwelling shall ever be here if they will it so: now mayst thou abide here if thou wilt, but I will not have it that either of you make strife with the other."

Grettir said he would not be the first to raise strife with any man, and so much the less as the bonder's will was such.

A little after came those foster-brothers home; things went not merrily betwixt Thorgeir and Grettir, but Thormod bore himself well. Goodman Thorgils said to the foster-brothers even as he had said to Grettir; and of such worth they held him, that neither cast an untoward word at the other although their minds went nowise the same way: and so wore the early winter.

Now men say that Thorgils owned those isles, which are called Olaf's-isles, and lie out in the firth a sea-mile and a half off Reekness; there had bonder Thorgils a good ox that he might not fetch home in the autumn; and he was ever saying that he would fain have him against Yule. Now, one day those foster-brothers got ready to seek the ox, if a third man could be gotten to their aid: Grettir offered to go with them, and they were well pleased thereat; they went, the three of them, in a ten-oared boat: the weather was cold, and the wind shifting from the north, and the craft lay up on Whaleshead-holm.

Now they sail out, and somewhat the wind got up, but they came to the isle and got hold of the ox; then asked Grettir which they would do, bear the ox aboard or keep hold of the craft, because the surf at the isle was great; then they bade him hold the boat; so he stood amidships on that side which looked from shore, and the sea took him up to the shoulder-blades, yet he held her so that she moved nowise: but Thorgeir took the ox behind and Thormod before, and so hove it down to the boat; then they sat down to row, and Thormod rowed in the bows, Thorgeir amidships, and Grettir aft, and therewith they made out into the open bay; but when they came off Goat-rock, a squall caught them, then said Thorgeir, "The stern is fain to lag behind."

Then said Grettir, "The stern will not be left if the rowing afore be good."

Thereat Thorgeir fell to rowing so hard that both the tholes were broken: then said he, "Row on, Grettir, while I mend the thole-pins."

Then Grettir pulled mightily while Thorgeir did his mending, but when Thorgeir took to rowing again, the oars had got so worn that Grettir shook them asunder on the gunwale.

"Better," quoth Thormod, "to row less and break nought."

Then Grettir caught up two unshapen oar beams that lay in the boat and bored large holes in the gunwales, and rowed withal so mightily that every beam creaked, but whereas the craft was good, and the men somewhat of the brisker sort, they reached Whaleshead-holm.

Then Grettir asked whether they would rather go home with the ox or haul up the boat; they chose to haul up the boat, and hauled it up with all the sea that was in it, and all the ice, for it was much covered with icicles: but Grettir led home the ox, and exceeding stiff in tow he was, and very fat, and he grew very weary, and when they came up below Titling-stead could go no more.

The foster-brothers went up to the house, for neither would help the other in his allotted work; Thorgils asked after Grettir, but they told him where they had parted; then he sent men to meet him, and when they came down to Cave-knolls they saw how there came towards them a man with a neat on his back, and lo, there was Grettir come, bearing the ox: then all men wondered at his great might.

Now Thorgeir got very envious of Grettir’s strength, and one day somewhat after Yule, Grettir went alone to bathe; Thorgeir knew thereof, and said to Thormod, "Let us go on now, and try how Grettir will start if I set on him as he comes from his bathing."

"That is not my mind," said Thormod, "and no good wilt thou get from him."

"I will go though," says Thorgeir; and therewith he went down to the slope, and bore aloft an axe.

By then was Grettir walking up from the bath, and when they met, Thorgeir said; "Is it true, Grettir," says he, "that thou hast said so much as that thou wouldst never run before one man?"

"That I know not for sure," said Grettir, "yet but a little way have I run before thee."

Thorgeir raised aloft the axe, but therewith Grettir ran in under Thorgeir and gave him an exceeding great fall: then said Thorgeir to Thormod, "Wilt thou stand by and see this fiend drive me down under him?"

Thormod caught hold of Grettir’s feet, and was minded to pull him from off Thorgeir, but could do nought thereat: he was girt with a short-sword and was going to draw it, when goodman Thorgils came up and bade them be quiet and have nought to do with Grettir.

So did they and turned it all to game, and no more is told of their dealings; and men thought Thorgils had great luck in that he kept such reckless men in good peace.

But when spring came they all went away; Grettir went round to Codfirth, and he was asked, how he liked the fare of the winter abode at Reek-knolls; he answered, "There have I ever been as fain as might be of my meals when I got at them."

Thereafter he went west over the heaths.

Chapter 51

Of the suit for the Slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain, and how Thorir of Garth would not that Grettir should be made sackless.

Thorgils Arison rode to the Thing with many men; and thither came all the great men of the land. Now Thorgils and Skapti the Lawman soon met, and fell to talking.

Then said Skapti, "Is it true, Thorgils, that thou hast harboured those three men through the winter who are deemed to be the wildest of all men; yea, and all of them outlawed withal, and yet hast kept them so quiet, that no one of them has done hurt to the other?"

Thorgils said it was true enough.

Skapti said that great might over men it showed forth in him; "But how goes it, thinkest thou, with the temper of each of them; and which of them thinkest thou the bravest man?"

Thorgils said, "I deem they are all of them full stout of heart; but two of them I deem know what fear is, and yet in unlike ways; for Thormod is a great believer and fears God much; but Grettir is so fearsome in the dark, that he dares go nowhither after dusk has set in, if he may do after his own mind. But my kinsman Thorgeir I deem knows not how to fear."

"Yea, so it is with their minds as thou sayest," said Skapti; and with that they left talking.

Now, at this Althing Thorod Drapa-Stump brought forward a suit for the slaying of Thorbiorn Oxmain, which he had not brought to a hearing at the Hunawater Thing, because of the kin of Atli, and he deemed that here his case would be less like to be thrown over. The kinsmen of Atli sought counsel of Skapti about the case; and he said he saw in it a lawful defence, so that full atonement would be forthcoming therefor. Then were these matters laid unto umpiredom, and most men were minded that the slayings of Atli and Thorbiorn should be set one against the other.

But when Skapti knew that, he went to the judges, and asked whence they had that? They said that they deemed the slain men were bonders of equal worth.

Then Skapti asked, which was the first, the outlawry of Grettir or the slaying of Atli? So, when that was reckoned up, there was a week's space betwixt Grettir's outlawry at the Althing and the slaying of Atli, which befell just after it.

Then said Skapti, "Thereof my mind misgave me, that ye had made an oversight in setting on foot the suit in that ye made him a suitor, who was outlawed already, and could neither defend nor prosecute his own case. Now I say that Grettir has nought to do with the case of the slaying, but let him take up the blood-suit, who is nighest of kin by law."

Then said Thorod Drapa-Stump, "And who shall answer for the slaying of Thorbiorn my brother?"

"See ye to that for yourselves," said Skapti; "but the kin of Grettir will never pour out fee for him or his works, if no peace is to be bought for him."

Now when Thorvald Asgeirson was aware that Grettir was set aside from following the blood-suit, he and his sought concerning who was the next of kin; and that turned out to be Skeggi, son of Gamli of Meals, and Uspak, son of Glum of Ere in Bitra; they were both of them exceeding zealous and pushing.

Now must Thorod give atonement for Atli's slaying, and two hundreds in silver he had to pay.

Then spake Snorri the Godi, "Will ye now, Ramfirthers," says he, "that this money-fine should fall away, and that Grettir be made sackless withal, for in my mind it is that as a guilty man he will be sorely felt?"

Grettir's kin took up his word well, and said that they heeded the fee nought if he might have peace and freedom. Thorod said that he saw Grettir's lot would be full of heavy trouble, and made as if he would take the offer, for his part. Then Snorri bade them first know if Thorir of Garth would give his leave to Grettir being made free; but when Thorir heard thereof he turned away exceeding wroth, and said that Grettir should never either get out of his outlawry or be brought out of it: "And the more to bring that about," said he, "a greater price shall be put on his head than on the head of any outlaw or wood-man yet."

So, when he took the thing so ill, the freeing of Grettir came to nought, and Gamli and his fellows took the money to them, and kept it in their ward; but Thorod Drapa-Stump had no atonement for his brother Thorbiorn.

Now Thorir and Thorod set each of them on Grettir's head three marks of silver, and that folk deemed a new thing, for never had any greater price been laid down to such an end before than three marks in all.

Snorri said it was unwisely done to make a sport of keeping a man in outlawry who might work so much ill, and that many a man would have to pay for it.

But now men part and ride home from the Thing.

Chapter 52

How Grettir was taken by the Icefirth Carles

When Grettir came over Codfirth-heath down into Longdale, he swept up unsparingly the goods of the petty bonders, and had of every man what he would; from some he took weapons, from some clothes; and these folk gave up in very unlike ways; but as soon as he was gone, all said they gave them unwillingly.

In those days dwelt in Waterfirth Vermund the Slender, the brother of Slaying-Styr; he had to wife Thorbiorg, the daughter of Olaf Peacock, son of Hoskuld. She was called Thorbiorg the Big; but at the time that Grettir was in Longdale had Vermund ridden to the Thing.

Now Grettir went over the neck to Bathstead. There dwelt a man called Helgi, who was the biggest of bonders thereabout: from there had Grettir a good horse, which the bonder owned, and thence he went to Giorvidale, where farmed a man named Thorkel. He was well stored with victuals, yet a mannikin withal: therefrom took Grettir what he would, nor durst Thorkel blame him or withhold aught from him.

Thence went Grettir to Ere, and out along the side of the firth, and had from every farm victuals and clothes, and dealt hardly with many; so that most men deemed him a heavy trouble to live under.

Now he fared fearlessly withal, and took no keep of himself, and so went on till he came to Waterfirth-dale, and went to the mountain-dairy, and there he dwelt a many nights, and lay in the woods there, and took no heed to himself; but when the herdsmen knew that, they went to the farm, and said that to that stead was a fiend come whom they deemed nowise easy to deal with; then the farmers gathered together, and were thirty men in all: they lurked in the wood, so that Grettir was unaware of them, and let a shepherd spy on Grettir till they might get at him, yet they wotted not clearly who the man was.

Now so it befell that on a day as Grettir lay sleeping, the bonders came upon him, and when they saw him they took counsel how they should take him at the least cost of life, and settled so that ten men should leap on him, while some laid bonds on his feet; and this they did, and threw themselves on him, but Grettir broke forth so mightily that they fell from off him, and he got to his knees, yet thereby they might cast the bonds over him, and round about his feet; then Grettir spurned two of them so hard about the ears that they lay stunned on the earth. Now one after the other rushed at him, and he struggled hard and long, yet had they might to overcome him at the last, and so bound him.

Thereafter they talked over what they should do with him, and they bade Helgi of Bathstead take him and keep him in ward till Vermund came home from the Thing. He answered

"Other things I deem more helpful to me than to let my house-carles sit over him, for my lands are hard to work, nor shall he ever come across me."

Then they bade Thorkel of Giorvidale take and keep him, and said that he was a man who had enow.

But Thorkel spake against it, and said that for nought would he do that: "Whereas I live alone in my house with my Carline, far from other men; nor shall ye lay that box on me," said he.

"Then, Thoralf of Ere," said they, "do thou take Grettir and do well to him till after the Thing; or else bring him on to the next farm, and be answerable that he get not loose, but deliver him bound as now thou hast him."

He answers, "Nay, I will not take Grettir, for I have neither victuals nor money to keep him withal, nor has he been taken on my land, and I deem it more trouble than honour to take him, or to have aught to do with him, nor shall he ever come into my house."

Thereafter they tried it with every bonder, but one and all spake against it; and after this talk have merry men made that lay which is hight Grettir’s-faring, and added many words of good game thereto for the sport of men.

So when they had talked it over long, they said, with one assent, that they would not make ill hap of their good-hap; so they went about and straightway reared up a gallows there in the wood, with the mind to hang Grettir, and made great clatter thereover.

Even therewith they see six folk riding down below in the dale, and one in coloured clothes, and they guessed that there would goodwife Thorbiorg be going from Waterfirth; and so it was, and she was going to the mountain-dairy. Now she was a very stirring woman, and exceeding wise; she had the ruling of the neighbourhood, and settled all matters, when Vermund was from home. Now she turned to where the men were gathered, and was helped off her horse, and the bonders gave her good welcome.

Then said she, "What have ye here? or who is the big-necked one who sits in bonds yonder?"

Grettir named himself, and greeted her.

She spake again, "What drove thee to this, Grettir," says she, "that thou must needs do riotously among my Thing-men?"

"I may not look to everything; I must needs be somewhere," said he.

"Great ill luck it is," says she, "that these milksops should take thee in such wise that none should fall before thee. What are ye minded to do with him?"

The bonders told her that they were going to tie him up to the gallows for his lawlessness.

She answers, "Maybe Grettir is guilty enough therefor, but it is too great a deed for you, Icefirthers, to take his life, for he is a famous man, and of mighty kin, albeit he is no lucky man; but now what wilt thou do for thy life, Grettir, if I give it thee?"

He answered, "What sayest thou thereto?"

She said, "Thou shalt make oath to work no evil riots here in Icefirth, and take no revenge on whomsoever has been at the taking of thee."

Grettir said that she should have her will, and so he was loosed; and he says of himself that at that time of all times did he most rule his temper, when he smote them not as they made themselves great before him.

Now Thorbiorg bade him go home with her, and gave him a horse for his riding; so he went to Waterfirth and abode there till Vermund came home, and the housewife did well to him, and for this deed was she much renowned far and wide in the district.

But Vermund took this ill at his coming home, and asked what made Grettir there? Then Thorbiorg told him how all had gone betwixt Grettir and the Icefirthers.

"What reward was due to him," said Vermund, "that thou gavest him his life?"

"Many grounds there were thereto," said Thorbiorg; "and this, first of all, that thou wilt be deemed a greater chief than before in that thou hast a wife who has dared to do such a deed; and then withal surely would Hrefna his kinswoman say that I should not let men slay him; and, thirdly, he is a man of the greatest prowess in many wise."

"A wise wife thou art withal," said Vermund, "and have thou thanks therefor."

Then he said to Grettir, "Stout as thou art, but little was to be paid for thee, when thou must needs be taken of mannikins; but so ever it fares with men riotous."

Then Grettir sang this stave

"Ill luck-to me
That I should be
On sea-roof-firth
Borne unto earth;
Ill luck enow

To lie alow,
This head of mine
Griped fast by swine."

"What were they minded to do to thee," said Vermund, "when they took thee there?"

Quoth Grettir

"There many men
Bade give me then
E'en Sigar's meed

For lovesome deed;
Till found me there
That willow fair,
Whose leaves are praise,
Her stems good days."

Vermund asked, "Would they have hanged thee then, if they alone had had to meddle with matters?"

Said Grettir

"Yea, to the snare
That dangled there
My head must I
Soon bring anigh;
But Thorbiorg came
The brightest dame,
And from that need
The singer freed."

Then said Vermund, "Did she bid thee to her?"

Grettir answered

"Sif's lord's good aid,
My saviour, bade
To take my way
With her that day;
So did it fall;
And therewithal
A horse she gave;
Good peace I have."

"Mighty will thy life be and troublous," said Vermund; "but now thou hast learned to beware of thy foes; but I have no will to harbour thee, and gain therefor the ill-will of many rich men; but best is it for thee to seek thy kinsmen, though few men will be willing to take thee in if they may do aught else; nor to most men art thou an easy fellow withal."

Now Grettir was in Waterfirth a certain space, and then fared thence to the Westfirths, and sought shelter of many great men; but something ever came to pass whereby none of them would harbour him.

Chapter 53

Grettir with Thorstein Kuggson

When the autumn was somewhat spent, Grettir turned back by the south, and made no stay till he came to Liarskogar to Thorstein Kuggson, his kinsman, and there had he good welcome, for Thorstein bade him abide there through the winter, and that bidding he agreed to. Thorstein was a busy man and a good smith, and kept men close to their work; but Grettir had little mind to work, wherefore their tempers went but little together.

Thorstein had let make a church at his homestead; and a bridge he had made out from his house, wrought with great craft; for in the outside bridge, under the beams that held it up, were rings wrought all about, and din-bells, so that one might hear over to Scarf-stead, half a sea-mile off, if aught went over the bridge, because of the shaking of the rings. Thorstein had much to do over this work, for he was a great worker of iron; but Grettir went fiercely at the iron-smiting, yet was in many minds thereover; but he was quiet through the winter, so that nought befell worthy telling. But when the Ramfirthers knew that Grettir was with Thorstein, they had their band afoot as soon as spring came. So when Thorstein knew that, he bade Grettir seek some other shelter than his house, "For I see thou wilt not work, and men who will do nought are not meet men for me."

"Where wouldst thou have me go, then?" said Grettir.

Thorstein bade him fare to the south country, and find his kin, "But come to me if they avail thee not."

Now so Grettir wrought that he went south to Burgfirth, to Grim Thorhallson, and dwelt there till over the Thing. Then Grim sent him on to Skapti the Lawman at Hjalli, and he went south by the lower heaths and stayed not till he came to Thorhall, son of Asgrim, son of Ellida-grim, and went little in the peopled lands. Thorhall knew Grettir because of his father and mother, and, indeed, by then was the name of Grettir well renowned through all the land because of his great deeds.

Thorhall was a wise man, and he did well to Grettir, but would not let him abide there long.

Chapter 54

Grettir meets Hallmund on the Keel

Now Grettir fared from Tongue up to Hawkdale, and thence north upon the Keel, and kept about there long that summer; nor was there trust of him that he would not take men's goods from them, as they went from or to the north over the Keel, because he was hard put to it to get wares.

Now on a day, when as Grettir would keep about the north at Doveness-path, he saw a man riding from the north over the Keel; he was huge to behold on horseback, and had a good horse, and an embossed bridle well wrought; another horse he had in tow and bags thereon; this man had withal a slouched hat on his head, nor could his face be clearly seen.

Now Grettir looked hard at the horse and the goods thereon, and went to meet the man, and greeting him asked his name, but he said he was called Air. "I wot well what thou art called," said he, "for thou shalt be Grettir the Strong, the son of Asmund. Whither art thou bound?"

"As to the place I have not named it yet," said Grettir; "but as to my errand, it is to know if thou wilt lay down some of the goods thou farest with."

Said Air, "Why should I give thee mine own, or what wilt thou give me therefor?"

Grettir answers, "Hast thou not heard that I take, and give no money again? and yet it seems to most men that I get what I will."

Said Air, "Give such choice as this to those who deem it good, but not thus will I give up what I have; let each of us go his own way."

And therewithal he rode forth past Grettir and spurred his horse.

"Nay, we part not so hastily," said Grettir, and laid hold of the reins of Air’s horse in front of his hands, and held on with both hands.

Said Air, "Go thy ways, nought thou hast of me if I may hold mine own."

"That will now be proven," said Grettir.

Now Air stretched his hands down the head-gear and laid hold of the reins betwixt Grettir’s hands and the snaffle-rings and dragged at them so hard that Grettir’s hands were drawn down along the reins, till Air dragged all the bridle from him.

Grettir looked into the hollow of his hands, and saw that this man must have strength in claws rather than not, and he looked after him, and said, "Whither art thou minded to fare?"

Air answered and sang

"To the Kettle’s side
Now will I ride,
Where the waters fall
From the great ice-wall;
If thou hast mind
There mayest thou find
With little stone
Fist’s land alone."

Grettir said, "It is of no avail to seek after thine abode if thou tellest of it no clearer than this."

Then Air spake and sang

"I would not hide
Where I abide,
If thou art fain
To see me again;
From that lone weald,
Over Burgfirth field,
That ye men name
Balljokul, I came."

Thereat they parted, and Grettir sees that he has no strength against this man; and therewithal he sang a stave

"Too far on this luckless day,
Atli, good at weapon-play,
Brisk Illugi were from me;
Such-like oft I shall not be
As I was, when I must stand
With the reins drawn through my hand
By the unflinching losel Air.
Maids weep when they know I fear."

Thereafter Grettir went to the south from the Keel; and rode to Hjalli and found Skapti, and prayed for watch and ward from him.

Skapti said, "It is told me that thou farest somewhat lawlessly, and layest hand on other men's goods; and this beseems thee ill, great of kin as thou art. Now all would make a better tale, if thou didst not rob and reive; but whereas I have to bear the name of lawman in the land, folk would not abide that I should take outlawed men to me, and break the laws thereby. I will that thou seek some place wherein thou wilt not have need to take men's goods from them."

Grettir said he would do even so, yet withal that he might scarcely be alone because he so feared the dark.

Skapti said that of that one thing then, which he deemed the best, he might not avail himself; "But put not such trust in any as to fare as thou didst in the Westfirths; it has been many a man's bane that he has been too trustful."

Grettir thanked him for his wholesome redes, and so turned back to Burgfirth in the autumn, and found Grim Thorhallson, his friend, and told him of Skapti's counsels; so Grim bade him fare north to Fishwater lakes on Ernewaterheath; and thus did he.

Chapter 55

Of Grettir on Ernewaterheath, and his dealings with Grim there

Grettir went up to Ernewaterheath and made there a hut for himself (whereof are yet signs left) and dwelt there, for now was he fain to do anything rather than rob and reive; he got him nets and a boat and caught fish for his food; exceeding dreary he deemed it in the mountains, because he was so fearsome of the dark.

But when other outlaws heard this, that Grettir was come down there, many of them had a mind to see him, because they thought there was much avail of him. There was a man called Grim, a Northlander, who was an outlaw; with him the Northlanders made a bargain that he should slay Grettir, and promised him freedom and gifts of money, if he should bring it to pass; so he went to meet Grettir, and prayed him to take him in.

Grettir answers, "I see not how thou art the more holpen for being with me, and troublous to heed are ye wood-folk; but ill I deem it to be alone, if other choice there were; but I will that such an one only be with me as shall do whatso work may befall."

Grim said he was of no other mind, and prayed hard that he might dwell there; then Grettir let himself be talked round, and took him in; and he was there on into the winter, and watched Grettir, but deemed it no little matter to set on him. Grettir misdoubted him, and had his weapons by his side night and day, nor durst Grim attack him while he was awake.

But one morning whenas Grim came in from fishing, he went into the hut and stamped with his foot, and would know whether Grettir slept, but he started in nowise, but lay still; and the short-sword hung up over Grettir’s head.

Now Grim thought that no better chance would happen, so he made a great noise, that Grettir might chide him, therefore, if he were awake, but that befell not. Now he thought that Grettir must surely be asleep, so he went stealthily up to the bed and reached out for the short-sword, and took it down, and unsheathed it. But even therewith Grettir sprang up on to the floor, and caught the short-sword just as the other raised it aloft, and laid the other hand on Grim betwixt the shoulders, and cast him down with such a fall, that he was well-nigh stunned; "Ah, such hast thou shown thyself," said he, "though thou wouldest give me good hope of thee." Then he had a true story from him, and thereafter slew him.

And now Grettir deemed he saw what it was to take in wood-folk, and so the winter wore; and nothing Grettir thought to be of more trouble than his dread of the dark.

Chapter 56

Of Grettir and Thorir Redbeard

Now Thorir of Garth heard where Grettir had set himself down, and was fain to set afoot some plot whereby he might be slain. There was a man called Thorir Redbeard; he was the biggest of men, and a great man-slayer, and therefore was he made outlaw throughout the land. Thorir of Garth sent word to him, and when they met he bade him go on an errand of his, and slay Grettir the Strong. Redbeard said that was no easy task, and that Grettir was a wise man and a wary.

Thorir bade him make up his mind to this; "A manly task it is for so brisk a fellow as thou; but I shall bring thee out of thine outlawry, and therewithal give thee money enough."

So by that counsel Redbeard abode, and Thorir told him how he should go about the winning of Grettir. So thereafter he went round the land by the east, for thus he deemed his faring would be the less misdoubted; so he came to Ernewaterheath when Grettir had been there a winter. But when he met Grettir, he prayed for winter dwelling at his hands.

Grettir answered, "I cannot suffer you often to play the like play with me that he did who came here last autumn, who bepraised me cunningly, and when he had been here a little while lay in wait for my life; now, therefore, I have no mind to run the risk any more of the taking in of wood-folk."

Thorir answered, "My mind goes fully with thine in that thou deemest ill of outlawed men: and thou wilt have heard tell of me as of a man-slayer and a misdoer, but not as of a doer of such foul deeds as to betray my master. Now, ill it is ill to be, for many deem others to do after their own ways; nor should I have been minded to come hither, if I might have had a choice of better things; withal I deem we shall not easily be won while we stand together; thou mightest risk trying at first how thou likest me, and let me go my ways whenso thou markest ill faith in me."

Grettir answered, "Once more then will I risk it, even with thee; but wot thou well, that if I misdoubt me of thee, that will be thy bane."

Thorir bade him do even so, and thereafter Grettir received him, and found this, that he must have the strength of twain, what work soever he took in hand: he was ready for anything that Grettir might set him to, and Grettir need turn to nothing, nor had he found his life so good since he had been outlawed, yet was he ever so wary of himself that Thorir never got a chance against him.

Thorir Redbeard was with Grettir on the heath for two winters, and now he began to loathe his life on the heath, and falls to thinking what deed he shall do that Grettir will not see through; so one night in spring a great storm arose while they were asleep; Grettir awoke therewith, and asked where was their boat. Thorir sprang up, and ran down to the boat, and brake it all to pieces, and threw the broken pieces about here and there, so that it seemed as though the storm had driven them along. Then he went into the hut, and called out aloud,

"Good things have not befallen us, my friend," said he; "for our boat is all broken to pieces, and the nets lie a long way out in the water."

"Go and bring them in then," said Grettir, "for methinks it is with thy goodwill that the boat is broken."

Thorir answered, "Among manly deeds swimming is the least handy to me, but most other deeds, I think, I may do against men who are not marvellous; thou mayest wot well enough that I was minded that thou shouldst not have to work while I abode here, and this I would not bid if it were in me to do it."

Then Grettir arose and took his weapons, and went to the water-side. Now the land was so wrought there that a ness ran into the water, and a great creek was on the other side, and the water was deep right up to the shore.

Now Grettir spake: "Swim off to the nets, and let me see how skilled a man thou art."

"I told thee before," said Thorir, "that I might not swim; and now I know not what is gone with thy manliness and daring."

"Well, the nets I may get in," said Grettir, "but betray thou me not, since I trust in thee."

Said Thorir, "Deem me not to be so shamed and worthless."

"Thou wilt thyself prove thyself, what thou art," said Grettir, and therewith he put off his clothes and weapons, and swam off for the nets. He swept them up together, and brought them to land, and cast them on to the bank; but when he was minded to come aland, then Thorir caught up the short-sword and drew it hastily, and ran therewith swiftly on Grettir, and smote at him as he set foot on the bank; but Grettir fell on his back down into the water, and sank like a stone; and Thorir stood gazing out on to the water, to keep him off from the shore if he came up again; but Grettir dived and groped along the bottom as near as he might to the bank, so that Thorir might not see him till he came into the creek at his back, and got aland; and Thorir heeded him not, and felt nought till Grettir heaved him up over his head, and cast him down so hard that the short-sword flew out of his hand; then Grettir got hold of it and had no words with him, but smote off his head straightway, and this was the end of his life.

But after this would Grettir never take outlaws to him, yet hardly might he bear to be alone.

Chapter 57

How Thorir of Garth set on Grettir on Ernewaterheath

At the Althing Thorir of Garth heard of the slaying of Thorir Redbeard, and now he thought he saw that he had no light task to deal with; but such rede he took that he rode west over the lower heathlands from the Thing with well-nigh eighty men, and was minded to go and take Grettir's life: but when Grim Thorhallson knew thereof he sent Grettir word and bade him beware of himself, so Grettir ever took heed to the goings of men. But one day he saw many men riding who took the way to his abode; so he ran into a rift in the rocks, nor would he flee because he had not seen all the strength of those folk.

Then up came Thorir and all his men, and bade them smite Grettir's head from his body, and said that the ill-doer's life would be had cheaply now.

Grettir answered, "Though the spoon has taken it up, yet the mouth has had no sup. From afar have ye come, and marks of the game shall some have ere we part."

Then Thorir egged on his men busily to set on him; but the pass was narrow, and he could defend it well from one side; yet hereat he marvelled, that howsoever they went round to the back of him, yet no hurt he got thereby; some fell of Thorir's company, and some were wounded, but nothing might they do.

Then said Thorir, "Oft have I heard that Grettir is a man of marvel before all others for prowess and good heart, but never knew I that he was so wise a wizard as now I behold him; for half as many again fall at his back as fall before him; lo, now we have to do with trolls and no men."

So he bid them turn away and they did so. Grettir marvelled how that might be, for withal he was utterly foredone.

Thorir and his men turn away and ride toward the north country, and men deemed their journey to be of the shame fullest; eighteen men had they left there and many were wounded withal.

Now Grettir went up into the pass, and found there one great of growth, who sat leaning against the rock and was sore wounded. Grettir asked him of his name, and he said he was hight Hallmund.

"And this I will tell thee to know me by, that thou didst deem me to have a good hold of the reins that summer when we met on the Keel; now, methinks, I have paid thee back therefor."

"Yea, in sooth," said Grettir, "I deem that thou hast shown great manliness toward me; whenso I may, I will reward thee."

Hallmund said, "But now I will that thou come to my abode, for thou must e'en think time drags heavily here on the heaths."

Grettir said he was fain thereof; and now they fare both together south under Balljokul, and there had Hallmund a huge cave, and a daughter great of growth and of high mind; there they did well to Grettir, and the woman healed the wounds of both of them, and Grettir dwelt long there that summer, and a lay he made on Hallmund, wherein is this

"Wide and high doth Hallmund stride
In the hollow mountain side."

And this stave also is therein

"At Ernewater, one by one,
Stole the swords forth in the sun,

Eager for the road of death
Swept athwart by sharp spears' breath;
Many a dead Wellwharfer's lands
That day gave to other hands.
Hallmund, dweller in the cave,
Grettir's life that day did save."

Men say that Grettir slew six men in that meeting, but Hallmund twelve.

Now as the summer wore Grettir yearned for the peopled country, to see his friends and kin; Hallmund bade him visit him when he came to the south country again, and Grettir promised him so to do; then he went west to Burgfirth, and thence to the Broadfirth Dales, and sought counsel of Thorstein Kuggson as to where he should now seek for protection, but Thorstein said that his foes were now so many that few would harbour him; "But thou mightest fare south to the Marshes and see what fate abides thee there."

So in the autumn Grettir went south to the Marshes.

Chapter 58

Grettir in Fairwoodfell

In those days dwelt at Holm Biorn the Hitdale-Champion, who was the son of Arngeir, the son of Berse the Godless, the son of Balk, who settled Ramfirth as is aforesaid; Biorn was a great chief and a hardy man, and would ever harbour outlawed men.

Now Grettir came to Holm, and Biorn gave him good cheer, for there had been friendship between the earlier kin of both of them; so Grettir asked if he would give him harbourage; but Biorn said that he had got to himself so many feuds through all the land that men would shun harbouring him so long as to be made outlaws therefor: "But some gain will I be to thee, if thou lettest those men dwell in peace who are under my ward, whatsoever thou dost by other men in the country-side."

Grettir said yea thereto. Then said Biorn, "Well, I have thought over it, and in that mountain, which stretches forth outside of Hitriver, is a stead good for defence, and a good hiding-place withal, if it be cunningly dealt with; for there is a hollow through the mountain, that is seen from the way below; for the highway lies beneath it, but above is a slip of sand and stones so exceeding steep, that few men may come up there if one hardy man stand on his defence above in the lair. Now this seems to me the best rede for thee, and the one thing worth talking of for thine abode, because, withal, it is easy to go thence and get goods from the Marshes, and right away to the sea."

Grettir said that he would trust in his foresight if he would give him any help. Then he went up to Fairwoodfell and made his abode there; he hung grey wadmal before the hole in the mountain, and from the way below it was like to behold as if one saw through. Now he was wont to ride for things

needful through the country-side, and men deemed a woful guest had come among them whereas he went.

Thord Kolbeinson dwelt at Hitness in those days, and a good skald he was; at that time was there great enmity betwixt him and Biorn; and Biorn was but half loth, though Grettir wrought some ill on Thord’s men or his goods.

Grettir was ever with Biorn, and they tried their skill in many sports, and it is shown in the story of Biorn that they were deemed equal in prowess, but it is the mind of most that Grettir was the strongest man ever known in the land, since Orm the son of Storolf, and Thoralf the son of Skolm, left off their trials of strength. Grettir and Biorn swam in one spell all down Hitriver, from the lake right away to the sea: they brought those stepping-stones into the river that have never since been washed away either by floods, or the drift of ice, or glacier slips.

So Grettir abode in Fairwoodfell for one winter, in such wise, that none set on him, though many lost their goods at his hands and could do nought therefor, for a good place for defence he had, and was ever good friend to those nighest to him.

Chapter 59

Gisli’s meeting with Grettir

There was a man hight Gisli, the son of that Thorstein whom Snorri Godi had slain. Gisli was a big man and strong, a man showy in weapons and clothes, who made much of himself, and was somewhat of a self-praiser; he was a seafaring man, and came one summer out to Whiteriver, whenas Grettir had been a winter on the fell. Thord, son of Kolbein, rode to his ship, and Gisli gave him good welcome, and bade him take of his wares whatso he would; thereto Thord agreed, and then they fell to talk one with the other, and Gisli said:

"Is that true which is told me, that ye have no counsel that avails to rid you of a certain outlaw who is doing you great ill?"

Thord said, "We have not tried aught on him yet, but to many he seems a man hard to deal with, and that has been proven on many a man."

"It is like, methinks, that you should find Biorn a heavy trouble, if ye may not drive away this man: luckless it is for you withal, that I shall be too far off this winter to better matters for you."

"Thou wilt be better pleased to deal with him by hearsay."

"Nay, no need to tell me of Grettir," said Gisli; "I have borne harder brunts when I was in warfare along with King Knut the Mighty, and west over the Sea, and I was ever thought to hold my own; and if I should have a chance at him I would trust myself and my weapons well enough."

Thord said he would not work for nought if he prevailed against Grettir; "For there is more put upon his head than on the head of any other of wood-folk; six marks of silver it was; but last summer Thorir of Garth laid thereto yet three marks; and men deem he will have enough to do therefor whose lot it is to win it."

"All things soever will men do for money," says Gisli, "and we chapmen not the least; but now shall we keep this talk hushed up, for mayhap he will be the warier," says he, "if he come to know that I am with you against him: now I am minded to abide this winter at Snowfellsness at Wave-ridge. Is his lair on my way at all? for he will not foresee this, nor shall I draw together many men against him."

Thord liked the plot well, he rode home therewith and held his peace about this; but now things went according to the saw, a listening ear in the holt is anear; men had been by at the talk betwixt Thord and Gisli, who were friends to Biorn of Hitdale, and they told him all from end to end; so when Biorn and Grettir met, Biorn showed forth the whole matter to him, and said that now he might prove how he could meet a foe.

"It would not be bad sport," said he, "if thou wert to handle him roughly, but to slay him not, if thou mightest do otherwise."

Grettir smiled thereat, but spake little.

Now at the folding time in the autumn Grettir went down to Flysia-wharf and got sheep for himself; he had laid hold on four wethers; but the bonders became ware of his ways and went after him; and these two things befell at the same time, that he got up under the fell-side, and that they came upon him, and would drive the sheep from him, yet bare they no weapon against him; they were six altogether, and stood thick in his path. Now the sheep troubled him and he waxed wroth, and caught up two of those men, and cast them down over the hill-side, so that they lay stunned; and when the others saw that, they came on less eagerly; then Grettir took up the sheep and locked them together by the horns, and threw them over his shoulders, two on each side, and went up into his lair.

So the bonders turned back, and deemed they had got but ill from him, and their lot misliked them now worse than before.

Now Gisli abode at his ship through the autumn till it was rolled ashore. Many things made him abide there, so he was ready late, and rode away but a little before winter-nights. Then he went from the south, and guested under Raun on the south side of Hitriver. In the morning, before he rode thence, he began a talk with his fellows:

"Now shall we ride in coloured clothes to-day, and let the outlaw see that we are not like other wayfarers who are drifted about here day by day."

So this they did, and they were three in all: but when they came west over the river, he spake again to them:

"Here in these bents, I am told, lurks the outlaw, and no easy way is there up to him; but may it not perchance seem good to him to come and meet us and behold our array?"

They said that it was ever his wont so to do. Now that morning Grettir had risen early in his lair; the weather was cold and frosty, and snow had fallen, but not much of it. He saw how three men rode from the south over Hitriver, and their state raiment glittered and their inlaid shields. Then it came into his mind who these should be, and he deems it would be good for him to get some rag of their array; and he was right wishful withal to meet such braggarts: so he catches up his weapons and runs down the slip-side. And when Gisli heard the clatter of the stones, he spake thus:

"There goes a man down the hill-side, and somewhat big he is, and he is coming to meet us: now, therefore, let us go against him briskly, for here is good getting come to hand."

His fellows said that this one would scarce run into their very hands, if he knew not his might; "And good it is that he bewail who brought the woe."

So they leapt off their horses, and therewith Grettir came up to them, and laid hands on a clothes-bag that Gisli had tied to his saddle behind him, and said

"This will I have, for oft I lowt for little things."

Gisli answers, "Nay, it shall not be; dost thou know with whom thou hast to do?"

Says Grettir, "I am not very clear about that; nor will I have much respect for persons, since I am lowly now, and ask for little."

"Mayhap thou thinkest it little," says he, "but I had rather pay down thirty hundreds; but robbery and wrong are ever uppermost in thy mind methinks; so on him, good fellows, and let see what he may do."

So did they, and Grettir gave back before them to a stone which stands by the way and is called Grettir's-Heave, and thence defended himself; and Gisli egged on his fellows eagerly; but Grettir saw now that he was no such a hardy heart as he had made believe, for he was ever behind his fellows' backs; and withal he grew aweary of this fulling business, and swept round the short-sword, and smote one of Gisli's fellows to the death, and leaped down from the stone, and set on so fiercely, that Gisli shrank aback before him all along the hill-side: there Gisli's other fellow was slain, and then Grettir spake:

"Little is it seen in thee that thou hast done well wide in the world, and in ill wise dost thou part from thy fellows."

Gisli answers, "Hottest is the fire that lies on oneselfwith hell's-man are dealings ill."

Then they gave and took but a little, before Gisli cast away his weapons, and took to his heels out along the mountain. Grettir gave him time to cast off whatso he would, and every time Gisli saw a chance for it he threw off somewhat of his clothes; and Grettir never followed him so close but that there was still some space betwixt them. Gisli ran right past that mountain and then across Coldriver-dale, and then through Aslaug's-lithe and above by Kolbeinstead, and then out into Burgh-lava; and by then was he in shirt and breech alone, and was now exceeding weary. Grettir still followed after him, and there was ever a stone's throw between them; and now he pulled up a great bush. But Gisli made no stay till he came out at Haf-firth-river, and it was swollen with ice and ill to ford; Gisli made straightway for the river, but Grettir ran in on him and seized him, and then the strength of either was soon known: Grettir drave him down under him, and said,

"Art thou that Gisli who would fain meet Grettir Asmundson?"

Gisli answers, "I have found him now, in good sooth, nor do I know in what wise we shall part: keep that which thou hast got, and let me go free."

Grettir said, "Nay, thou art scarce deft enow to learn what I have to teach thee, so needs must I give thee somewhat to remember it by."

Therewith he pulls the shirt up over his head and let the twigs go all down his back, and along both sides of him, and Gisli strove all he might to wriggle away from him; but Grettir flogged him through and through, and then let him go; and Gisli thought he would learn no more of Grettir and have such another flogging withal; nor did he ever again earn the like skin-rubbing.

But when he got his legs under him again, he ran off unto a great pool in the river, and swam it, and came by night to a farm called Horseholt, and utterly foredone he was by then. There he lay a week with his body all swollen, and then fared to his abode.

Grettir turned back, and took up the things Gisli had cast down, and brought them to his place, nor from that time forth gat Gisli aught thereof.

Many men thought Gisli had his due herein for the noise and swagger he had made about himself; and Grettir sang this about their dealings together

"In fighting ring where steed meets steed,
The sluggish brute of mongrel breed,

Certes will shrink back nothing less
Before the stallion's dauntlessness,
Than Gisli before me to-day;
As, casting shame and clothes away,
And sweating o'er the marsh with fear,
He helped the wind from mouth and rear."

The next spring Gisli got ready to go to his ship, and bade men above all things beware of carrying aught of his goods south along the mountain, and said that the very fiend dwelt there.

Gisli rode south along the sea all the way to his ship, and never met Grettir again; and now he is out of the story.

But things grew worse between Thord Kolbeinson and Grettir, and Thord set on foot many a plot to get Grettir driven away or slain.

Chapter 60

Of the Fight at Hitriver

When Grettir had been two winters at Fairwoodfell, and the third was now come, he fared south to the Marshes, to the farm called Brook-bow, and had thence six wethers against the will of him who owned them. Then he went to Acres and took away two neat for slaughtering, and many sheep, and then went up south of Hitriver.

But when the bonders were ware of his ways, they sent word to Thord at Hitness, and bade him take in hand the slaying of Grettir; but he hung back, yet for the prayers of men got his son Arnor, who was afterwards called Earls' Skald, to go with them, and bade them withal to take heed that Grettir escaped not.

Then were men sent throughout all the country-side. There was a man called Biarni, who dwelt at Jorvi in Flysia-wharf, and he gathered men together from without Hitriver; and their purpose was that a band should be on either bank of the river.

Now Grettir had two men with him; a man called Eyolf, the son of the bonder at Fairwood, and a stout man; and another he had besides.

First came up Thorarin of Acres and Thorfinn of Brook-bow, and there were nigh twenty men in their company. Then was Grettir fain to make westward across the river, but therewith came up on the west side thereof Arnor and Biarni. A narrow ness ran into the water on the side whereas Grettir stood; so he drave the beasts into the furthermost parts of the ness, when he saw the men coming up, for never would he give up what he had once laid his hands on.

Now the Marsh-men straightway made ready for an onslaught, and made themselves very big; Grettir bade his fellows take heed that none came at his back; and not many men could come on at once.

Now a hard fight there was betwixt them, Grettir smote with the short-sword with both hands, and no easy matter it was to get at him; some of the Marsh-men fell, and some were wounded; those on the other side of the river were slow in coming up, because the ford was not very near, nor did the fight go on long before they fell off; Thorarin of Acres was a very old man, so that he was not at this onslaught. But when this fight was over, then came up Thrand, son of Thorarin, and Thorgils Ingialdson, the brother’s son of Thorarin, and Finnbogi, son of Thorgeir Thorhaddson of Hitdale, and Steinulf Thorleifson from Lavadale; these egged on their men eagerly to set on, and yet another fierce onslaught they made. Now Grettir saw that he must either flee or spare himself nought; and now he went forth so fiercely that none might withstand him; because they were so many that he saw not how he might escape, but that he did his best before he fell; he was fain withal that the life of such an one as he deemed of some worth might be paid for his life; so he ran at Steinulf of Lavadale, and smote him on the head and clave him down to the shoulders, and straightway with another blow smote Thorgils Ingialdson in the midst and well-nigh cut him asunder; then would Thrand run forth to revenge his kinsman, but Grettir smote him on the right thigh, so that the blow took off all the muscle, and straightway was he unmeet for fight; and thereafter withal a great wound Grettir gave to Finnbogi.

Then Thorarin cried out and bade them fall back, "For the longer ye fight the worse ye will get of him, and he picks out men even as he willeth from your company."

So did they, and turned away; and there had ten men fallen, and five were wounded to death, or crippled, but most of those who had been at that meeting had some hurt or other; Grettir was marvellously wearied and yet but a little wounded.

And now the Marsh-men made off with great loss of men, for many stout fellows had fallen there.

But those on the other side of the river fared slowly, and came not up till the meeting was all done; and when they saw how ill their men had fared, then Arnor would not risk himself, and much rebuke he got therefor from his father and many others; and men are minded to think that he was no man of prowess.

Now that place where they fought is called Grettir’s-point to-day.

Chapter 61

How Grettir left Fairwoodfell, and of his abiding in Thorir’s-dale.

But Grettir and his men took horse and rode up to the fell, for they were all wounded, and when they came to Fairwood there was Eyolf left; the farmer’s daughter was out of doors, and asked for tidings; Grettir told all as clearly as might be, and sang a stave withal

"O thou warder of horn’s wave,
Not on this side of the grave
Will Steinulf s head be whole again;
Many more there gat their bane;
Little hope of Thorgils now
After that bone-breaking blow:
Eight Gold-scatterers more they say,
Dead along the river lay."

Thereafter Grettir went to his lair and sat there through the winter; but when he and Biorn met, Biorn said to him, that he deemed that much had been done; "and no peace thou wilt have here in the long run: now hast thou slain both kin and friends of mine, yet shall I not cast aside what I have promised thee whiles thou art here."

Grettir said he must needs defend his hands and life, "but ill it is if thou mislikest it."

Biorn said that things must needs be as they were.

A little after came men to Biorn who had lost kinsmen at Grettir’s hands, and bade him not to suffer that riotous man to abide there longer in their despite; and Biorn said that it should be as they would as soon as the winter was over.

Now Thrand, the son of Thorarin of Acres, was healed; a stout man he was, and had to wife Steinun, daughter of Rut of Combeness; Thorleif of Lavadale, the father of Steinulf, was a very mighty man, and from him are come the men of Lavadale.

Now nought more is told of the dealings of Grettir with the Marsh-men while he was on the mountain; Biorn still kept up his friendship with him, though his friends grew somewhat the fewer for that he let Grettir abide there, because men took it ill that their kin should fall unatoned.

At the time of the Thing, Grettir departed from the Marsh-country, and went to Burgfirth and found Grim Thorhallson, and sought counsel of him, as to what to do now. Grim said he had no strength to keep him, therefore fared Grettir to find Hallmund his friend, and dwelt there that summer till it wore to its latter end.

In the autumn Grettir went to Goatland, and waited there till bright weather came on; then he went up to Goatland Jokul, and made for the south-east, and had with him a kettle, and tools to strike fire withal. But men deem that he went there by the counsel of Hallmund, for far and wide was the land known of him.

So Grettir went on till he found a dale in the jokul, long and somewhat narrow, locked up by jokuls all about, in such wise that they overhung the dale. He came down somehow, and then he saw fair hill-sides grass-grown and set with bushes. Hot springs there were therein, and it seemed to him that it was by reason of earth-fires that the ice-cliffs did not close up over the vale.

A little river ran along down the dale, with level shores on either side thereof. There the sun came but seldom; but he deemed he might scarcely tell over the sheep that were in that valley, so many they were; and far better and fatter than any he had ever seen.

Now Grettir abode there, and made himself a hut of such wood as he could come by. He took of the sheep for his meat, and there was more on one of them than on two elsewhere: one ewe there was, brown with a polled head, with her lamb, that he deemed the greatest beauty for her goodly growth. He

was fain to take the lamb, and so he did, and thereafter slaughtered it: three stone of suet there was in it, but the whole carcase was even better. But when Brownhead missed her lamb, she went up on Grettir's hut every night, and bleated in suchwise that he might not sleep anight, so that it misliked him above all things that he had slaughtered the lamb, because of her troubling.

But every evening at twilight he heard some one hoot up in the valley, and then all the sheep ran together to one fold every evening.

So Grettir says, that a half-troll ruled over the valley, a giant hight Thorir, and in trust of his keeping did Grettir abide there; by him did Grettir name the valley, calling it Thorir's-dale. He said withal that Thorir had daughters, with whom he himself had good game, and that they took it well, for not many were the new-comers thereto; but when fasting time was, Grettir made this change therein, that fat and livers should be eaten in Lent.

Now nought happed to be told of through the winter. At last Grettir found it so dreary there, that he might abide there no longer: then he gat him gone from the valley, and went south across the jokul, and came from the north, right against the midst of Shieldbroadfell.

He raised up a flat stone and bored a hole therein, and said that whoso put his eye to the hole in that stone should straightway behold the gulf of the pass that leads from Thorir's-vale.

So he fared south through the land, and thence to the Eastfirths; and in this journey he was that summer long, and the winter, and met all the great men there, but somewhat ever thrust him aside that nowhere got he harbouring or abode; then he went back by the north, and dwelt at sundry places.

Chapter 62

Of the Death of Hallmund, Grettir's Friend.

A little after Grettir had gone from Ernewaterheath, there came a man thither, Grim by name, the son of the widow at Kropp. He had slain the son of Eid Skeggison of the Ridge, and had been outlawed therefor; he abode whereas Grettir had dwelt afore, and got much fish from the water. Hallmund took it ill that he had come in Grettir's stead, and was minded that he should have little good hap how much fish soever he caught.

So it chanced on a day that Grim had caught a hundred fish, and he bore them to his hut and hung them up outside, but the next morning when he came thereto they were all gone; that he deemed marvellous, and went to the water; and now he caught two hundred fish, went home and stored them up; and all went the same way, for they were all gone in the morning; and now he thought it hard to trace all to one spring. But the third day he caught three hundred fish, brought them home and watched over them from his shed, looking out through a hole in the door to see if aught might come anigh. Thus wore the night somewhat, and when the third part of the night was gone by, he heard one going along outside with heavy footfalls; and when he was ware thereof, he took an axe that he had, the sharpest of weapons, for he was fain to know what this one was about; and he saw that the new-comer had a great basket on his back. Now he set it down, and peered about, and saw no man abroad; he gropes about to the fishes, and deems he has got a good handful, and into the basket he scoops them one and all; then is the basket full, but the fishes were so big that Grim thought that no horse might bear more. Now he takes them up and puts himself under the load, and at that very point of time, when he was about to stand upright, Grim ran out, and with both hands smote at his neck, so that the axe sank into the shoulder; thereat he turned off sharp, and set off running with the basket south over the mountain.

Grim turned off after him, and was fain to know if he had got enough. They went south all the way to Balljokul, and there this man went into a cave; a bright fire burnt in the cave, and thereby sat a woman, great of growth, but shapely withal. Grim heard how she welcomed her father, and called him Hallmund. He cast down his burden heavily, and groaned aloud; she asked him why he was all covered with blood, but he answered and sang

"Now know I aright,
That in man's might,
And in man's bliss,
No trust there is;
On the day of bale
Shall all things fail;
Courage is o'er,
Luck mocks no more."

She asked him closely of their dealings, but he told her all even as it had befallen.

"Now shall thou hearken," said he, "for I shall tell of my deeds and sing a song thereon, and thou shall cut it on a staff as I give it out."

So she did, and he sung Hallmund's song withal, wherein is this

"When I drew adown
The bridle brown
Grettir's hard hold,
Men deemed me bold;
Long while looked then
The brave of men
In his hollow hands,
The harm of lands.

"Then came the day
Of Thorir's play
On Ernelakeheath,
When we from death
Our life must gain;
Alone we twain
With eighty men
Must needs play then.

"Good craft enow
Did Grettir show
On many a shield
In that same field;
Natheless I hear
That my marks were
The deepest still;
The worst to fill.

"Those who were fain
His back to gain
Lost head and hand,
Till of the band,
From the Well-wharf-side,
Must there abide
Eighteen behind
That none can find.

"With the giant’s kin
Have I oft raised din;
To the rock folk
Have I dealt out stroke;
Ill things could tell
That I smote full well;
The half-trolls know
My baneful blow.

"Small gain in me
Did the elf-folk see,
Or the evil wights
Who ride anights."

Many other deeds of his did Hallmund sing in that song, for he had fared through all the land.

Then spake his daughter, "A man of no slippery hand was that; nor was it unlike that this should hap, for in evil wise didst thou begin with him: and now what man will avenge thee?"

Hallmund answered, "It is not so sure to know how that may be; but, methinks, I know that Grettir would avenge me if he might come thereto; but no easy matter will it be to go against the luck of this man, for much greatness lies stored up for him."

Thereafter so much did Hallmund’s might wane as the song wore, that well-nigh at one while it befell that the song was done and Hallmund dead; then she grew very sad and wept right sore. Then came Grim forth and bade her be of better cheer, "For all must fare when they are fetched. This has been brought about by his own deed, for I could scarce look on while he robbed me."

She said he had much to say for it, "For ill deed gains ill hap."

Now as they talked she grew of better cheer, and Grim abode many nights in the cave, and got the song by heart, and things went smoothly betwixt them.

Grim abode at Ernewaterheath all the winter after Hallmund’s death, and thereafter came Thorkel Eyulfson to meet him on the Heath, and they fought together; but such was the end of their play that Grim might have his will of Thorkel’s life, and slew him not. So Thorkel took him to him, and got him sent abroad and gave him many goods; and therein either was deemed to have done well to the other. Grim betook himself to seafaring, and a great tale is told of him.

Chapter 63

How Grettir beguiled Thorir of Garth when he was nigh taking him

Now the story is to be taken up where Grettir came from the firths of the east-country; and now he fared with hidden-head for that he would not meet Thorir, and lay out that summer on Madderdale-heath and in sundry places, and at whiles he was at Reek-heath.

Thorir heard that Grettir was at Reek-heath, so he gathered men and rode to the heath, and was well minded that Grettir should not escape this time.

Now Grettir was scarce aware of them before they were on him; he was just by a mountain-dairy that stood back a little from the wayside, and another man there was with him, and when he saw their band, speedy counsel must he take; so he bade that they should fell the horses and drag them into the dairy shed, and so it was done.

Then Thorir rode north over the heath by the dairy, and missed friend from stead, for he found nought, and so turned back withal.

But when his band had ridden away west, then said Grettir, "They will not deem their journey good if we be not found; so now shall thou watch our horses while I go meet them, a fair play would be shown them if they knew me not."

His fellow strove to let him herein, yet he went none-the-less, and did on him other attire, with a slouched hat over his face and a staff in his hand, then he went in the way before them. They greeted him and asked if he had seen any men riding over the heath.

"Those men that ye seek have I seen; but little was wanting e’ennow but that ye found them, for there they were, on the south of yon bogs to the left."

Now when they heard that, off they galloped out on to the bogs, but so great a mire was there that nohow could they get on, and had to drag their horses out, and were wallowing there the more part of the day; and they gave to the devil withal the wandering churl who had so befooled them.

But Grettir turned back speedily to meet his fellow, and when they met he sang this stave

"Now make I no battle-field
With the searching stems of shield.
Rife with danger is my day,
And alone I go my way:
Nor shall I go meet, this tide,
Odin’s storm, but rather bide
Whatso fate I next may have;
Scarce, then, shall thou deem me brave.

"Thence where Thorir’s company
Thronging ride, I needs must flee;
If with them I raised the din,
Little thereby should I win;
Brave men’s clashing swords I shun,
Woods must hide the hunted one;

For through all things, good and ill,
Unto life shall I hold still."

Now they ride at their swiftest west over the heath and forth by the homestead at Garth, before ever Thorir came from the wilderness with his band; and when they drew nigh to the homestead a man fell in with them who knew them not.

Then saw they how a woman, young and grand of attire, stood without, so Grettir asked who that woman would be. The new-comer said that she was Thorir’s daughter. Then Grettir sang this stave

"O wise sun of golden stall,
When thy sire comes back to hall,
Thou mayst tell him without sin
This, though little lies therein,

That thou saw’st me ride hereby,
With but two in company,
Past the door of Skeggi’s son,
Nigh his hearth, O glittering one."

Hereby the new-comer thought he knew who this would be, and he rode to peopled parts and told how Grettir had ridden by.

So when Thorir came home, many deemed that Grettir had done the bed well over their heads. But Thorir set spies on Grettir’s ways, whereso he might be. Grettir fell on such rede that he sent his fellow to the west country with his horses; but he went up to the mountains and was in disguised attire, and fared about north there in the early winter, so that he was not known.

But all men deemed that Thorir had got a worse part than before in their dealings together.

Chapter 64

Of the ill haps at Sand-heaps, and how Guest came to the Goodwife there

There was a priest called Stein, who dwelt at Isledale-river, in Bard-dale; he was good at husbandry and rich in beasts; his son was Kiartan, a brisk man and a well grown. Thorstein the White was the name of him who dwelt at Sand-heaps, south of Isledale-river; his wife was called Steinvor, a young woman and merry-hearted, and children they had, who were young in those days. But that place men deemed much haunted by the goings of trolls.

Now it befell two winters before Grettir came into the north country that Steinvor the goodwife of Sand-heaps fared at Yule-tide to the stead of Isledale-river according to her wont, but the goodman abode at home. Men lay down to sleep in the evening, but in the night they heard a huge crashing about the bonder’s bed; none durst arise and see thereto, for very few folk were there. In the morning the goodwife came home, but the goodman was gone, and none knew what had become of him.

Now the next year wears through its seasons, but the winter after the goodwife would fain go to worship, and bade her house-carle abide behind at home; thereto was he loth, but said nathless that she must rule; so all went the same way and the house-carle vanished; and marvellous men deemed it; but folk saw certain stains of blood about the outer door; therefore they deemed it sure that an evil wight

had taken them both.

Now that was heard of wide through the country-side, and Grettir withal was told thereof; so he took his way to Bard-dale, and came to Sand-heaps at Yule-eve, and made stay there, and called himself Guest. The goodwife saw that he was marvellous great of growth, but the home-folk were exceeding afeard of him; he prayed for guesting there; the mistress said that there was meat ready for him, "but as to thy safety see to that thyself."

He said that so he should do: "Here will I abide, but thou shalt go to worship if thou wilt."

She answered, "Meseems thou art a brave man if thou durst abide at home here."

"For one thing alone will I not be known," said he.

She said, "I have no will to abide at home, but I may not cross the river."

"I will go with thee," says Guest.

Then she made her ready for worship, and her little daughter with her. It thawed fast abroad, and the river was in flood, and therein was the drift of ice great: then said the goodwife,

"No way across is there either for man or horse."

"Nay, there will be fords there," said Guest, "be not afeard."

"Carry over the little maiden first," said the goodwife; "she is the lightest."

"I am loth to make two journeys of it," said Guest, "I will bear thee in my arms."

She crossed herself, and said, "This will not serve; what wilt thou do with the maiden?"

"A rede I see for that," said he, and therewith caught them both up, and laid the little one in her mother’s lap, and set both of them thus on his left arm, but had his right free; and so he took the ford withal, nor durst they cry out, so afeard were they.

Now the river took him up to his breast forthwith, and a great ice-floe drave against him, but he put forth the hand that was free and thrust it from him; then it grew so deep, that the stream broke on his shoulder; but he waded through it stoutly, till he came to the further shore, and there cast them aland: then he turned back, and it was twilight already by then he came home to Sand-heaps, and called for his meat.

So when he was fulfilled, he bade the home-folk go into the chamber; then he took boards and loose timber, and dragged it athwart the chamber, and made a great bar, so that none of the home-folk might come thereover: none durst say aught against him, nor would any of them make the least sound. The entrance to the hall was through the side wall by the gable, and dais was there within; there Guest lay down, but did not put off his clothes, and light burned in the chamber over against the door: and thus Guest lay till far on in the night.

The goodwife came to Isledale-river at church-time, and men marvelled how she had crossed the river; and she said she knew not whether a man or a troll had brought her over.

The priest said he was surely a man, though a match for few; "But let us hold our peace hereon," he said; "maybe he is chosen for the bettering of thy troubles." So the goodwife was there through the night.

Chapter 65

Of Guest and the Troll-wife.

Now it is to be told of Guest, that when it drew towards midnight, he heard great din without, and thereafter into the hall came a huge troll-wife, with a trough in one hand and a chopper wondrous great in the other; she peered about when she came in, and saw where Guest lay, and ran at him; but he sprang up to meet her, and they fell a-wrestling terribly, and struggled together for long in the hall. She was the stronger, but he gave back with craft, and all that was before them was broken, yea, the cross-panelling withal of the chamber. She dragged him out through the door, and so into the outer doorway, and then he betook himself to struggling hard against her. She was fain to drag him from the house, but might not until they had broken away all the fittings of the outer door, and borne them out on their shoulders: then she laboured away with him down towards the river, and right down to the deep gulfs.

By then was Guest exceeding weary, yet must he either gather his might together, or be cast by her into the gulf. All night did they contend in such wise; never, he deemed, had he fought with such a horror for her strength's sake; she held him to her so hard that he might turn his arms to no account save to keep fast hold on the middle of the witch.

But now when they came on to the gulf of the river, he gives the hag a swing round, and therewith got his right hand free, and swiftly seized the short-sword that he was girt withal, and smote the troll therewith on the shoulder, and struck off her arm; and therewithal was he free, but she fell into the gulf and was carried down the force.

Then was Guest both stiff and weary, and lay there long on the rocks, then he went home, as it began to grow light, and lay down in bed, and all swollen and blue he was.

But when the goodwife came from church, she thought her house had been somewhat roughly handled: so she went to Guest and asked what had happed that all was broken and down-trodden. He told her all as it had befallen: she deemed these things imported much, and asked him what man he was in good sooth. So he told her the truth, and prayed that the priest might be fetched, for that he would fain see him: and so it was done.

But when Stein the priest came to Sand-heaps, he knew forthwith, that thither was come Grettir Asmundson, under the name of Guest.

So the priest asked what he deemed had become of those men who had vanished; and Grettir said that he thought they would have gone into the gulf: the priest said that he might not trow that, if no signs could be seen thereof: then said Grettir that later on that should be known more thoroughly. So the priest went home.

Grettir lay many nights a-bed, and the mistress did well to him, and so Yule-tide wore.

Now Grettir's story is that the troll-wife cast herself into the gulf when she got her wound; but the men of Bard-dale say that day dawned on her, while they wrestled, and that she burst, when he cut the arm from her; and that there she stands yet on the cliff, a rock in the likeness of a woman.

Now the dale-dwellers kept Grettir in hiding there; but in the winter after Yule, Grettir fared to Isledale-river, and when he met the priest, he said, "Well, priest, I see that thou hadst little faith in my tale; now will I, that thou go with me to the river, and see what likelihood there is of that tale being true."

So the priest did; and when they came to the force-side, they saw a cave up under the cliff; a sheer rock that cliff was, so great that in no place might man come up thereby, and well-nigh fifty fathoms was it down to the water. Now they had a rope with them, but the priest said:

"A risk beyond all measure, I deem it to go down here."

"Nay," said Grettir, "it is to be done, truly, but men of the greatest prowess are meetest therefor: now will I know what is in the force, but thou shall watch the rope."

The priest bade him follow his own rede, and drave a peg down into the sward on the cliff, and heaped stones up over it, and sat thereby.

Chapter 66

Of the Dweller in the Cave under the Force

Now it is to be told of Grettir that he set a stone in a bight of the rope and let it sink down into the water.

"In what wise hast thou mind to go?" said the priest.

"I will not go bound into the force," said Grettir; "such things doth my heart forebode."

With that he got ready for his journey, and was lightly clad, and girt with the short-sword, and had no weapon more.

Then he leapt off the cliff into the force; the priest saw the soles of his feet, and knew not afterwards what was become of him. But Grettir dived under the force, and hard work it was, because the whirlpool was strong, and he had to dive down to the bottom, before he might come up under the force. But thereby was a rock jutting out, and thereon he gat; a great cave was under the force, and the river fell over it from the sheer rocks. He went up into the cave, and there was a great fire flaming from amidst of brands; and there he saw a giant sitting withal, marvellously great and dreadful to look on. But when Grettir came anigh, the giant leapt up and caught up a glaive and smote at the new-comer, for with that glaive might a man both cut and thrust; a wooden shaft it had, and that fashion of weapon men called then, heft-sax. Grettir hewed back against him with the short-sword, and smote the shaft so that he struck it asunder; then was the giant fain to stretch aback for a sword that hung up there in the cave; but therewithal Grettir smote him afore into the breast, and smote off well-nigh all the breast bone and the belly, so that the bowels tumbled out of him and fell into the river, and were driven down along the stream; and as the priest sat by the rope, he saw certain fibres all covered with blood swept down the swirls of the stream; then he grew unsteady in his place, and thought for sure that Grettir was dead, so he ran from the holding of the rope, and gat him home. Thither he came in the evening and said, as one who knew it well, that Grettir was dead, and that great scathe was it of such a man.

Now of Grettir must it be told that he let little space go betwixt his blows or ever the giant was dead; then he went up the cave, and kindled a light and espied the cave. The story tells not how much he got therein, but men deem that it must have been something great. But there he abode on into the night; and he found there the bones of two men, and bore them together in a bag; then he made off from the cave and swam to the rope and shook it, and thought that the priest would be there yet; but when he knew that the priest had gone home, then must he draw himself up by strength of hand, and thus he came up out on to the cliff.

Then he fared home to Isledale-river, and brought into the church porch the bag with the bones, and therewithal a rune-staff whereon this song was marvellous well cut

"There into gloomy gulf I passed,
O’er which from the rock’s throat is cast
The swirling rush of waters wan,
To meet the sword-player feared of man.
By giant’s hall the strong stream pressed
Cold hands against the singer’s breast;
Huge weight upon him there did hurl
The swallower of the changing whirl."

And this other one withal

"The dreadful dweller of the cave
Great strokes and many ’gainst me drave;
Full hard he had to strive for it,
But toiling long he wan no whit;
For from its mighty shaft of tree
The heft-sax smote I speedily;
And dulled the flashing war-flame fair
In the black breast that met me there."

Herein was it said how that Grettir had brought those bones from the cave; but when the priest came to the church in the morning he found the staff and that which went with it, but Grettir was gone home to Sand-heaps.

Chapter 67

Grettir driven from Sand-heaps to the West

But when the priest met Grettir he asked him closely about what had happed; so he told him all the tale of his doings, and said withal that the priest had been unfaithful to him in the matter of the rope-holding; and the priest must needs say that so it was.

Now men deemed they could see that these evil wights had wrought the loss of the men there in the dale; nor had folk hurt ever after from aught haunting the valley, and Grettir was thought to have done great deeds for the cleansing of the land. So the priest laid those bones in earth in the churchyard.

But Grettir abode at Sand-heaps the winter long, and was hidden there from all the world.

But when Thorir of Garth heard certain rumours of Grettir being in Bard-dale, he sent men for his head; then men gave him counsel to get him gone therefrom, so he took his way to the west.

Now when he came to Maddervales to Gudmund the Rich, he prayed Gudmund for watch and ward; but Gudmund said he might not well keep him. "But that only is good for thee," said he, "to set thee down there, whereas thou shouldst have no fear of thy life."

Grettir said he wotted not where such a place might be.

Gudmund said, "An isle there lies in Skagafirth called Drangey; so good a place for defence it is, that no man may come thereon unless ladders be set thereto. If thou mightest get there, I know for sure that no man who might come against thee, could have good hope while thou wert on the top thereof, of overcoming thee, either by weapons or craft, if so be thou shouldst watch the ladders well."

"That shall be tried," said Grettir, "but so fearsome of the dark am I grown, that not even for the keeping of my life may I be alone."

Gudmund said, "Well, that may be; but trust no man whatsoever so much as not to trust thyself better; for many men are hard to see through."

Grettir thanked him for his wholesome redes, and then fared away from Maddervales, nor made stay before he came to Biarg; there his mother and Illugi his brother welcomed him joyfully, and he abode there certain nights.

There he heard of the slaying of Thorstein Kuggson, which had befallen the autumn before Grettir went to Bard-dale; and he deemed therewithal that felling went on fast enough.

Then Grettir rode south to Holtbeacon-heath, and was minded to avenge Hallmund if he might meet Grim; but when he came to Northriverdale, he heard that Grim had been gone two winters ago, as is aforesaid; but Grettir had heard so late of these tidings because he had gone about disguised those two winters, and the third winter he had been in Thorirs-dale, and had seen no man who might tell him any news. Then he betook himself to the Broadfirth-dales, and dwelt in Eastriverdale, and lay in wait for folk who fared over Steep-brent; and once more he swept away with the strong hand the goods of the small bonders. This was about the height of summer-tide.

Now when the summer was well worn, Steinvor of Sand-heaps bore a man-child, who was named Skeggi; he was first fathered on Kiartan, the son of Stein, the priest of Isle-dale-river. Skeggi was unlike unto his kin because of his strength and growth, but when he was fifteen winters old he was the strongest man in the north-country, and was then known as Grettir’s son; men deemed he would be a marvel among men, but he died when he was seventeen years of age, and no tale there is of him.

Chapter 68

How Thorod, the Son of Snorri Godi, went against Grettir.

After the slaying of Thorstein Kuggson, Snorri Godi would have little to do with his son Thorod, or with Sam, the son of Bork the Fat; it is not said what they had done therefor, unless it might be that they had had no will to do some great deed that Snorri set them to; but withal Snorri drave his son Thorod away, and said he should not come back till he had slain some wood-dweller; and so must matters stand.

So Thorod went over to the Dales; and at that time dwelt at Broadlair-stead in Sokkolfsdale a widow called Geirlaug; a herdsman she kept, who had been outlawed for some onslaught; and he was a growing lad. Now Thorod Snorrison heard thereof, and rode in to Broadlair-stead, and asked where was the herdsman; the goodwife said that he was with the sheep.

"What wilt thou have to do with him?"

"His life will I have," says Thorod, "because he is an outlaw, and a wood-wight."

She answers, "No glory is it for such a great warrior as thou deemest thyself, to slay a mannikin like that; I will show thee a greater deed, if thine heart is so great that thou must needs try thyself."

"Well, and what deed?" says he.

She answers, "Up in the fell here, lies Grettir Asmundson; play thou with him, for such a game is more meet for thee."

Thorod took her talk well; "So shall it be," says he, and therewith he smote his horse with his spurs, and rode along the valley; and when he came to the hill below Eastriver, he saw where was a dun horse, with his saddle on, and thereby a big man armed, so he turned thence to meet him.

Grettir greeted him, and asked who he was. Thorod named himself, and said,

"Why askest thou not of my errand rather than of my name?"

"Why, because," said Grettir, "it is like to be such as is of little weight: art thou son to Snorri Godi?"

"Yea, yea," says Thorod; "but now shall we try which of us may do the most."

"A matter easy to be known," says Grettir; "hast thou not heard that I have ever been a treasure-hill that most men grope in with little luck?"

"Yea, I know it," said Thorod; "yet must somewhat be risked."

And now he drew his sword therewith and set on Grettir eagerly; but Grettir warded himself with his shield, but bore no weapon against Thorod; and so things went awhile, nor was Grettir wounded.

At last he said, "Let us leave this play, for thou wilt not have victory in our strife."

But Thorod went on dealing blows at his maddest. Now Grettir got aweary of dealing with him, and caught him and set him down by his side, and said

"I may do with thee even as I will, nor do I fear that thou wilt ever be my bane; but the grey old carle, thy father, Snorri, I fear in good sooth, and his counsels that have brought most men to their knees: and for thee, thou shouldst turn thy mind to such things alone as thou mayst get done, nor is it child’s play to fight with me."

But when Thorod saw that he might bring nought to pass, he grew somewhat appeased, and therewithal they parted. Thorod rode home to Tongue and told his father of his dealings with Grettir. Snorri Godi smiled thereat, and said,

"Many a man lies hid within himself, and far unlike were your doings; for thou must needs rush at him to slay him, and he might have done with thee even as he would. Yet wisely has Grettir done herein, that he slew thee not; for I should scarce have had a mind to let thee lie unavenged; but now indeed shall I give him aid, if I have aught to do with any of his matters."

It was well seen of Snorri, that he deemed Grettir had done well to Thorod, and he ever after gave his good word for Grettir.

Chapter 69

How Grettir took leave of his Mother at Biarg, and fared with Illugi his Brother to Drangey

Grettir rode north to Biarg a little after he parted with Thorod, and lay hid there yet awhile; then so great grew his fear in the dark, that he durst go nowhere as soon as dusk set in. His mother bade him abide there, but said withal, that she saw that it would scarce avail him aught, since he had so many cases against him throughout all the land. Grettir said that she should never have trouble brought on her for his sake.

"But I shall no longer do so much for the keeping of my life," says he, "as to be alone."

Now Illugi his brother was by that time about fifteen winters old, and the goodliest to look on of all men; and he overheard their talk together. Grettir was telling his mother what rede Gudmund the Rich had given him, and now that he should try, if he had a chance, to get out to Drangey, but he said withal, that he might not abide there, unless he might get some trusty man to be with him. Then said Illugi,

"I will go with thee, brother, though I know not that I shall be of any help to thee, unless it be that I shall be ever true to thee, nor run from thee whiles thou standest up; and moreover I shall know more surely how thou farest if I am still in thy fellowship."

Grettir answered, "Such a man thou art, that I am gladder in thee than in any other; and if it cross not my mother’s mind, fain were I that thou shouldst fare with me."

Then said Asdis, "Now can I see that it has come to this, that two troubles lie before us: for meseems I may ill spare Illugi, yet I know that so hard is thy lot, Grettir, that thou must in somewise find rede therefor: and howsoever it grieves me, O my sons, to see you both turn your backs on me, yet thus much will I do, if Grettir might thereby be somewhat more holpen than heretofore."

Hereat was Illugi glad, for that he deemed it good to go with Grettir.

So she gave them much of her chattels, and they made them ready for their journey. Asdis led them from out the garth, and before they parted she spake thus:

"Ah, my sons twain, there ye depart from me, and one death ye shall have together; for no man may flee from that which is wrought for him: on no day now shall I see either of you once again; let one fate be over you both, then; for I know not what weal ye go to get for yourselves in Drangey, but there shall ye both lay your bones, and many will begrudge you that abiding place. Keep ye heedfully from wiles, yet none the less there shall ye be bitten of the edge of the sword, for marvellously have my dreams gone: be well ware of sorcery, for little can cope with the cunning of eld."

And when she had thus spoken she wept right sore.

Then said Grettir, "Weep not, mother, for if we be set on with weapons, it shall be said of thee, that thou hast had sons, and not daughters: live on, well and hale."

Therewithal they parted. They fared north through the country side and saw their kin; and thus they lingered out the autumn into winter; then they turned toward Skagafirth and went north through Waterpass and thence to Reekpass, and down Saemunds-lithe and so unto Longholt, and came to Dinby late in the day.

Grettir had cast his hood back on to his shoulders, for in that wise he went ever abroad whether the day were better or worse. So they went thence, and when they had gone but a little way, there met them a man, big-headed, tall, and gaunt, and ill clad; he greeted them, and either asked other for their names; they said who they were, but he called himself Thorbiorn: he was a land-louper, a man too lazy to work, and a great swaggerer, and much game and fooling was made with him by some folk: he thrust himself into their company, and told them much from the upper country about the folk there. Grettir had great game and merriment of him; so he asked if they had no need of a man who should work for them, "for I would fain fare with you," says he; and withal he got so much from their talk that they suffered him to follow them.

Much snow there was that day, and it was cold; but whereas that man swaggered exceedingly, and was the greatest of tomfools, he had a by-name, and was called Noise.

"Great wonder had those of Dinby when thou wentest by e’en now unhooded, in the foul weather," said Noise, "as to whether thou wouldst have as little fear of men as of the cold: there were two bonders’ sons, both men of great strength, and the shepherd called them forth to go to the sheep-watching with him, and scarcely could they clothe themselves for the cold."

Grettir said, "I saw within doors there a young man who pulled on his mittens, and another going betwixt byre and midden, and of neither of them should I be afeared."

Thereafter they went down to Sorbness, and were there through the night; then they fared out along the strand to a farm called Reeks, where dwelt a man, Thorwald by name, a good bonder. Him Grettir prayed for watch and ward, and told him how he was minded to get out to Drangey: the bonder said that those of Skagafirth would think him no god-send, and excused himself therewithal.

Then Grettir took a purse his mother had given to him, and gave it to the bonder; his brows lightened over the money, and he got three house-carles of his to bring them out in the night time by the light of the moon. It is but a little way from Reeks out to the island, one sea-mile only. So when they came to the isle, Grettir deemed it good to behold, because it was grass-grown, and rose up sheer from the sea, so that no man might come up thereon save there where the ladders were let down, and if the uppermost ladder were drawn up, it was no man’s deed to get upon the island. There also were the cliffs full of fowl in the summer-tide, and there were eighty sheep upon the island which the bonders owned, and they were mostly rams and ewes which they had mind to slaughter.

There Grettir set himself down in peace; and by then had he been fifteen or sixteen winters in outlawry, as Sturla Thordson has said.

Chapter 70

Of the Bonders who owned Drangey between them

In the days when Grettir came to Drangey, these were chief men of the country side of Skagafirth. Hialti dwelt at Hof in Hialtidale, he was the son of Thord, the son of Hialti, the son of Thord the Scalp: Hialti was a great chief, a right noble man, and much befriended. Thorbiorn Angle was the name of his brother, a big man and a strong, hardy and wild withal. Thord, the father of these twain, had married again in his old age, and that wife was not the mother of the brothers; and she did ill to her step-children, but served Thorbiorn the worst, for that he was hard to deal with and reckless. And on a day Thorbiorn Angle sat playing at tables, and his stepmother passed by and saw that he was playing at the knave-game, and the fashion of the game was the large tail-game. Now she deemed him thriftless, and cast some word at him, but he gave an evil answer; so she caught up one of the men, and drave the tail thereof into Thorbiorn's cheek-bone wherefrom it glanced into his eye, so that it hung out on his cheek. He sprang up, caught hold of her, and handled her roughly, insomuch that she took to her bed, and died thereof afterwards, and folk say that she was then big with child.

Thereafter Thorbiorn became of all men the most riotous; he took his heritage, and dwelt at first in Woodwick.

Haldor the son of Thorgeir, who was the son of Head-Thord, dwelt at Hof on Head-strand, he had to wife Thordis, the daughter of Thord Hialtison, and sister to those brothers Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle. Haldor was a great bonder, and rich in goods.

Biorn was the name of a man who dwelt at Meadness in the Fleets; he was a friend to Haldor of Hof. These men held to each other in all cases.

Tongue-Stein dwelt at Stonestead; he was the son of Biorn, the son of Ufeigh Thinbeard, son of that Crow-Hreidar to whom Eric of God-dales gave the tongue of land down from Hall-marsh. Stein was a man of great renown.

One named Eric was the son of Holmgang-Starri, the son of Eric of God-dales, the son of Hroald, the son of Geirmund Thick-beard; Eric dwelt at Hof in God-dales.

Now all these were men of great account.

Two brothers there were who dwelt at a place called Broad-river in Flat-lithe, and they were both called Thord; they were wondrous strong, and yet withal peaceable men both of them.

All these men had share in Drangey, and it is said that no less than twenty in all had some part in the island, nor would any sell his share to another; but the sons of Thord, Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle, had the largest share, because they were the richest men.

Chapter 71

How those of Skagafirth found Grettir on Drangey

Now time wears on towards the winter solstice; then the bonders get ready to go fetch the fat beasts for slaughter from the island; so they manned a great barge, and every owner had one to go in his stead, and some two.

But when these came anigh the island they saw men going about there; they deemed that strange, but guessed that men had been shipwrecked, and got aland there: so they row up to where the ladders were, when lo, the first-comers drew up the ladders.

Then the bonders deemed that things were taking a strange turn, and hailed those men and asked them who they were: Grettir named himself and his fellows withal: but the bonders asked who had brought him there.

Grettir answered, "He who owned the keel and had the hands, and who was more my friend than yours."

The bonders answered and said, "Let us now get our sheep, but come thou aland with us, keeping freely whatso of our sheep thou hast slaughtered."

"A good offer," said Grettir, "but this time let each keep what he has got; and I tell you, once for all, that hence I go not, till I am dragged away dead; for it is not my way to let that go loose which I have once laid hand on."

Thereat the bonders held their peace, and deemed that a woeful guest had come to Drangey; then they gave him choice of many things, both moneys and fair words, but Grettir said nay to one and all, and they gat them gone with things in such a stead, and were ill content with their fate; and told the men of the country-side what a wolf had got on to the island.

This took them all unawares, but they could think of nought to do herein; plentifully they talked over it that winter, but could see no rede whereby to get Grettir from the island.

Chapter 72

Of the Sports at Heron-ness Thing

Now the days wore till such time as men went to the Heron-ness Thing in spring-tide, and many came thronging there from that part of the country, wherefrom men had to go to that Thing for their suits. Men sat there long time both over the suits and over sports, for there were many blithe men in that country-side. But when Grettir heard that all men fared to the Thing, he made a plot with his friends; for he was in goodwill with those who dwelt nighest to him, and for them he spared nought that he could get. But now he said that he would go aland, and gather victuals, but that Illugi and Noise should stay behind. Illugi thought this ill counselled, but let things go as Grettir would.

So Grettir bade them watch the ladders well, for that all things lay thereon; and thereafter he went to the mainland, and got what he deemed needful: he hid himself from men whereso he came, nor did any one know that he was on the land. Withal he heard concerning the Thing, that there was much sport there, and was fain to go thither; so he did on old gear and evil, and thus came to the Thing, whenas men went from the courts home to their booths. Then fell certain young men to talking how that the day was fair and good, and that it were well, belike, for the young men to betake them to wrestling and merrymaking. Folk said it was well counselled; and so men went and sat them down out from the booths.

Now the sons of Thord, Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle, were the chief men in this sport; Thorbiorn Angle was boisterous beyond measure, and drove men hard and fast to the place of the sports, and every man must needs go whereas his will was; and he would take this man and that by the hands and drag him forth unto the playing-ground.

Now first those wrestled who were weakest, and then each man in his turn, and therewith the game and glee waxed great; but when most men had wrestled but those who were the strongest, the bonders fell to talking as to who would be like to lay hand to either of the Thords, who have been aforenamed; but there was no man ready for that. Then the Thords went up to sundry men, and put themselves forward for wrestling, but the nigher the call the further the man. Then Thorbiorn Angle looks about, and sees where a man sits, great of growth, and his face hidden somewhat. Thorbiorn laid hold of him, and tugged hard at him, but he sat quiet and moved no whit. Then said Thorbiorn,

"No one has kept his place before me to-day like thou hast; what man art thou?"

He answers, "Guest am I hight."

Said Thorbiorn, "Belike thou wilt do somewhat for our merriment; a wished-for guest wilt thou be."

He answered, "About and about, methinks, will things change speedily; nor shall I cast myself into play with you here, where all is unknown to me."

Then many men said he were worthy of good at their hands, if he, an unknown man, gave sport to the people. Then he asked what they would of him; so they prayed him to wrestle with some one.

He said he had left wrestling, "though time agone it was somewhat of a sport to me."

So, when he did not deny them utterly, they prayed him thereto yet the more.

He said, "Well, if ye are so fain that I be dragged about here, ye must do so much therefor, as to handsel me peace, here at the Thing, and until such time as I come back to my home."

Then they all sprang up and said that so they would do indeed; but Hafr was the name of him who urged most that peace should be given to the man. This Hafr was the son of Thorarin, the son of Hafr, the son of Thord Knob, who had settled land up from the Weir in the Fleets to Tongue-river, and who dwelt at Knobstead; and a wordy man was Hafr.

So now he gave forth the handselling grandly with open mouth, and this is the beginning thereof.

Chapter 73

The Handselling of Peace

Says he, "Herewith I establish peace betwixt all men, but most of all betwixt all men and this same Guest who sits here, and so is named; that is to say, all men of rule, and goodly bonders, and all men young, and fit to bear arms, and all other men of the country-side of Heron-ness Thing, whencesoever any may have come here, of men named or unnamed. Let us handsel safety and full peace to that unknown new-comer, yclept Guest by name, for game, wrestling, and all glee, for abiding here, and going home, whether he has need to fare over water, or over land, or over ferry; safety shall he have, in all steads named and unnamed, even so long as needs be for his coming home whole, under faith holden. This peace I establish on behoof of us, and of our kin, friends, and men of affinity, women even as men, bondswomen, even as bonds-men, swains and men of estate. Let him be a shamed peace-breaker, who breaks the peace, or spills the troth settled; turned away and driven forth from God, and good men of the kingdom of Heaven, and all Holy ones. A man not to be borne of any man, but cast out from all, as wide as wolves stray, or Christian men make for Churches, or heathen in God’s-houses do sacrifice, or fire burns, or earth brings forth, or a child, new-come to speech, calls

mother, or mother bears son, or the sons of men kindle fire, or ships sweep on, or shields glitter, or the sun shines, or the snow falls, or a Finn sweeps on skates, or a fir-tree waxes, or a falcon flies the spring-long day with a fair wind under either wing, or the Heavens dwindle far away, or the world is built, or the wind turns waters seaward, or carles sow corn. Let him shun churches, and Christian folk, and heathen men, houses and caves, and every home but the home of Hell. Now shall we be at peace and of one mind each with the other, and of goodwill, whether we meet on fell or foreshore, ship or snow-shoes, earth or ice-mount, sea or swift steed, even as each found his friend on water, or his brother on broad ways; in just such peace one with other, as father with son, or son with father in all dealings together. Now we lay hands together, each and all of us, to hold well this say of peace, and all words spoken in our settled troth: As witness God and good men, and all those who hear my words, and nigh this stead chance to stand."

Chapter 74

Of Grettir’s Wrestling: and how Thorbiorn Angle now bought the more part of Drangey

Then many fell to saying that many and great words had been spoken hereon; but now Guest said,

"Good is thy say and well hast thou spoken it; if ye spill not things hereafter, I shall not withhold that which I have to show forth."

So he cast off his hood, and therewith all his outer clothes.

Then they gazed one on the other, and awe spread over their faces, for they deemed they knew surely that this was Grettir Asmundson, for that he was unlike other men for his growth and prowess’ sake: and all stood silent, but Hafr deemed he had made himself a fool. Now the men of the country-side fell into twos and twos together, and one upbraided the other, but him the most of all, who had given forth the words of peace.

Then said Grettir; "Make clear to me what ye have in your minds, because for no long time will I sit thus unclad; it is more your matter than mine, whether ye will hold the peace, or hold it not."

They answered few words and then sat down: and now the sons of Thord, and Halldor their brother-in-law, talked the matter over together; and some would hold the peace, and some not; so as they elbowed one another, and laid their heads together. Grettir sang a stave

"I, well known to men, have been
On this morn both hid and seen;
Double face my fortune wears,
Evil now, now good it bears;
Doubtful play-board have I shown
Unto these men, who have grown
Doubtful of their given word;
Hafr’s big noise goes overboard."

Then said Tongue-stein, "Thinkest thou that, Grettir? Knowest thou then what the chiefs will make their minds up to? but true it is thou art a man above all others for thy great heart’s sake: yea, but dost thou not see how they rub their noses one against the other?"

Then Grettir sang a stave

"Raisers-up of roof of war,
Nose to nose in counsel are;
Wakeners of the shield-rain sit
Wagging beard to talk of it:
Scatterers of the serpent's bed
Round about lay head to head.

For belike they heard my name;
And must balance peace and shame."

Then spake Hialti the son of Thord; "So shall it not be," says he; "we shall hold to our peace and troth given, though we have been beguiled, for I will not that men should have such a deed to follow after, if we depart from that peace, that we ourselves have settled and handselled: Grettir shall go whither he will, and have peace until such time as he comes back from this journey; and then and not till then shall this word of truce be void, whatsoever may befall betwixt us meanwhile."

All thanked him therefor, and deemed that he had done as a great chief, such blood-guilt as there was on the other side: but the speech of Thorbiorn Angle was little and low thereupon.

Now men said that both the Thords should lay hand to Grettir, and he bade them have it as they would: so one of the brothers stood forth; and Grettir stood up stiff before him, and he ran at Grettir at his briskest, but Grettir moved no whit from his place: then Grettir stretched out his hand down Thord's back, over the head of him, and caught hold of him by the breeches, and tripped up his feet, and cast him backward over his head in such wise that he fell on his shoulder, and a mighty fall was that.

Then men said that both those brothers should go against Grettir at once; and thus was it done, and great swinging and pulling about there was, now one side, now the other getting the best of it, though one or other of the brothers Grettir ever had under him; but each in turn must fall on his knee, or have some slip one of the other; and so hard they griped each at each, that they were all blue and bruised.

All men thought this the best of sport, and when they had made an end of it, thanked them for the wrestling; and it was the deeming of those who sat thereby, that the two brothers together were no stronger than Grettir alone, though each of them had the strength of two men of the strongest: so evenly matched they were withal, that neither might get the better of the other if they tried it between them.

Grettir abode no long time at the Thing; the bonders bade him give up the island, but he said nay to this, nor might they do aught herein.

So Grettir fared back to Drangey, and Illugi was as fain of him as might be; and there they abode peacefully, and Grettir told them the story of his doings and his journeys; and thus the summer wore away.

All men deemed that those of Skagafirth had shown great manliness herein, that they held to their peace given; and folk may well mark how trusty men were in those days, whereas Grettir had done such deeds against them.

Now the less rich men of the bonders spake together, that there was little gain to them in holding small shares in Drangey; so they offered to sell their part to the sons of Thord; Hialti said that he would not deal with them herein, for the bonders made it part of the bargain, that he who bought of them should

either slay Grettir or get him away. But Thorbiorn Angle said, that he would not spare to take the lead of an onset against Grettir if they would give him wealth therefor. So his brother Hialti gave up to him his share in the island, for that he was the hardest man, and the least befriended of the twain; and in likewise too did other bonders; so Thorbiorn Angle got the more part of the island for little worth, but bound himself withal to get Grettir away.

Chapter 75

Thorbiorn Angle goes to Drangey to speak with Grettir

Whenas summer was far spent, Thorbiorn Angle went with a well-manned barge out to Drangey, and Grettir and his fellows stood forth on the cliff's edge; so there they talked together. Thorbiorn prayed Grettir to do so much for his word, as to depart from the island; Grettir said there was no hope of such an end.

Then said Thorbiorn, "Belike I may give thee meet aid if thou dost this, for now have many bonders given up to me their shares in the island."

Grettir answered, "Now hast thou shown forth that which brings me to settle in my mind that I will never go hence, whereas thou sayest that thou now hast the more part of the island; and good is it that we twain alone share the kale: for in sooth, hard I found it to have all the men of Skagafirth against me; but now let neither spare the other, for not such are we twain, as are like to be smothered in the friendship of men; and thou mayst leave coming hither, for on my side is all over and done."

"All things bide their day," said Thorbiorn, "and an ill day thou bidest."

"I am content to risk it," said Grettir; and in such wise they parted, and Thorbiorn went home.

Chapter 76

How Noise let the fire out on Drangey, and how Grettir must needs go aland for more

So the tale tells, that by then they had been two winters on Drangey, they had slaughtered well-nigh all the sheep that were there, but one ram, as men say, they let live; he was piebald of belly and head, and exceeding big-horned; great game they had of him, for he was so wise that he would stand waiting without, and run after them whereso they went; and he would come home to the hut anights and rub his horns against the door.

Now they deemed it good to abide on the island, for food was plenty, because of the fowl and their eggs; but firewood was right hard to come by; and ever Grettir would let the thrall go watch for drift, and logs were often drifted there, and he would bear them to the fire; but no need had the brothers to do any work beyond climbing into the cliffs when it liked them. But the thrall took to loathing his work, and got more grumbling and heedless than he was wont heretofore: his part it was to watch the fire night by night, and Grettir gave him good warning thereon, for no boat they had with them.

Now so it befell that on a certain night their fire went out; Grettir was wroth thereat, and said it was but his due if Noise were beaten for that deed; but the thrall said that his life was an evil life, if he must lie there in outlawry, and be shaken and beaten withal if aught went amiss.

Grettir asked Illugi what rede there was for the matter, but he said he could see none, but that they should abide there till some keel should be brought thither: Grettir said it was but blindness to hope for that. "Rather will I risk whether I may not come aland."

"Much my mind misgives me thereof," said Illugi, "for we are all lost if thou comest to any ill."

"I shall not be swallowed up swimming," said Grettir; "but henceforward I shall trust the thrall the worse for this, so much as lies hereon."

Now the shortest way to the mainland from the island, was a sea-mile long.

Chapter 77

Grettir at the home-stead of Reeks

Now Grettir got all ready for swimming, and had on a cowl of market-wadmal, and his breeches girt about him, and he got his fingers webbed together, and the weather was fair. So he went from the island late in the day, and desperate Illugi deemed his journey. Grettir made out into the bay, and the stream was with him, and a calm was over all. He swam on fast, and came aland at Reekness by then the sun had set: he went up to the homestead at Reeks, and into a bath that night, and then went into the chamber; it was very warm there, for there had been a fire therein that evening, and the heat was not yet out of the place; but he was exceeding weary, and there fell into a deep sleep, and so lay till far on into the next day.

Now as the morning wore the home folk arose, and two women came into the chamber, a handmaid and the goodman’s daughter. Grettir was asleep, and the bed-clothes had been cast off him on to the floor; so they saw that a man lay there, and knew him.

Then said the handmaiden: "So may I thrive, sister! here is Grettir Asmundson lying bare, and I call him right well ribbed about the chest, but few might think he would be so small of growth below; and so then that does not go along with other kinds of bigness."

The goodman’s daughter answered: "Why wilt thou have everything on thy tongue’s end? Thou art a measure-less fool; be still."

"Dear sister, how can I be still about it?" says the handmaid. "I would not have believed it, though one had told me."

And now she would whiles run up to him and look, and whiles run back again to the goodman’s daughter, screaming and laughing; but Grettir heard what she said, and as she ran in over the floor by him he caught hold of her, and sang this stave

"Stay a little, foolish one!
When the shield-shower is all done,
With the conquered carles and lords,
Men bide not to measure swords:
Many a man had there been glad,
Lesser war-gear to have had.
With a heart more void of fear;
Such I am not, sweet and dear."

Therewithal he swept her up into the bed, but the bonder’s daughter ran out of the place; then sang Grettir this other stave

"Sweet amender of the seam,
Weak and worn thou dost me deem:

O light-handed dear delight,
Certes thou must say aright.
Weak I am, and certainly
Long in white arms must I lie:
Hast thou heart to leave me then,
Fair-limbed gladdener of great men?"

The handmaid shrieked out, but in such wise did they part that she laid no blame on Grettir when all was over.

A little after, Grettir arose, and went to Thorvald the goodman, and told him of his trouble, and prayed bring him out; so did he, and lent him a boat, and brought him out, and Grettir thanked him well for his manliness.

But when it was heard that Grettir had swam a sea-mile, all deemed his prowess both on sea and land to be marvellous.

Those of Skagafirth had many words to say against Thorbiorn Angle, in that he drave not Grettir away from Drangey, and said they would take back each his own share; but he said he found the task no easy one, and prayed them be good to him, and abide awhile.

Chapter 78

Of Haring at Drangey, and the end of him

That same summer a ship came to the Gangpass-mouth, and therein was a man called Haeringa young man he was, and so lithe that there was no cliff that he might not climb. He went to dwell with Thorbiorn Angle, and was there on into the autumn; and he was ever urging Thorbiorn to go to Drangey, saying that he would fain see whether the cliffs were so high that none might come up them. Thorbiorn said that he should not work for nought if he got up into the island, and slew Grettir, or gave him some wound; and withal he made it worth coveting to Haering. So they fared to Drangey, and set the eastman ashore in a certain place, and he was to set on them unawares if he might come up on to the island, but they laid their keel by the ladders, and fell to talking with Grettir; and Thorbiorn asked him if he were minded now to leave the place; but he said that to nought was his mind so made up as to stay there.

"A great game hast thou played with us," said Thorbiorn; "but thou seemest not much afeard for thyself."

Thus a long while they gave and took in words, and came nowise together hereon.

But of Haering it is to be told that he climbed the cliffs, going on the right hand and the left, and got up by such a road as no man has gone by before or since; but when he came to the top of the cliff, he saw where the brothers stood, with their backs turned toward him, and thought in a little space to win both goods and great fame; nor were they at all aware of his ways, for they deemed that no man might come

up, but there whereas the ladders were. Grettir was talking with Thorbiorn, nor lacked there words of the biggest on either side; but withal Illugi chanced to look aside, and saw a man drawing anigh them.

Then he said, "Here comes a man at us, with axe raised aloft, and in right warlike wise he seems to fare."

"Turn thou to meet him," says Grettir, "but I will watch the ladders."

So Illugi turned to meet Haering, and when the eastman saw him, he turned and fled here and there over the island. Illugi chased him while the island lasted, but when he came forth on to the cliff’s edge Haering leapt down thence, and every bone in him was broken, and so ended his life; but the place where he was lost has been called Haering’s-leap ever since.

Illugi came back, and Grettir asked how he had parted from this one who had doomed them to die.

"He would have nought to do," says Illugi, "with my seeing after his affairs, but must needs break his neck over the rock; so let the bonders pray for him as one dead."

So when Angle heard that, he bade his folk make off. "Twice have I fared to meet Grettir, but no third time will I go, if I am nought the wiser first; and now belike they may sit in Drangey as for me; but in my mind it is, that Grettir will abide here but a lesser time than heretofore."

With that they went home, and men deemed this journey of theirs worser than the first, and Grettir abode that winter in Drangey, nor in that season did he and Thorbiorn meet again.

In those days died Skapti Thorodson the Lawman, and great scathe was that to Grettir, for he had promised to busy himself about his acquittal as soon as he had been twenty winters in outlawry, and this year, of which the tale was told e’en now, was the nineteenth year thereof.

In the spring died Snorri the Godi, and many matters befell in that season that come not into this story.

Chapter 79

Of the Talk at the Thing about Grettir’s Outlawry

That summer, at the Althing, the kin of Grettir spake many things concerning his outlawry, and some deemed he had outworn the years thereof, if he had come at all into the twentieth year; but they who had blood-suits against him would not have it so, and said, that he had done many an outlaw’s deed since he was first outlawed, and deemed his time ought to last longer therefor.

At that time was a new lawman made, Stein, the son of Thorgest, the son of Stein the Far-sailing, the son of Thorir Autumn-mirk; the mother of Stein was Arnora, the daughter of Thord the Yeller; and Stein was a wise man.

Now was he prayed for the word of decision; and he bade them search and see whether this were the twentieth summer since Grettir was made an outlaw, and thus it seemed to be.

But then stood forth Thorir of Garth, and brought all into dispute again, for he found that Grettir had been one winter out here a sackless man, amidst the times of his outlawry, and then nineteen were the winters of his outlawry found to be. Then said the lawman that no one should be longer in outlawry than twenty winters in all, though he had done outlaw’s deeds in that time.

"But before that, I declare no man sackless."

Now because of this was the acquittal delayed for this time, but it was thought a sure thing that he would be made sackless the next summer. But that misliked the Skagafirthers exceeding ill, if Grettir were to come out of his outlawry, and they bade Thorbiorn Angle do one of two things, either give back the island or slay Grettir; but he deemed well that he had a work on his hands, for he saw no rede for the winning of Grettir, and yet was he fain to hold the island; and so all manner of craft he sought for the overcoming of Grettir, if he might prevail either by guile or hardihood, or in any wise soever.

Chapter 80

Thorbiorn Angle goes with his Foster-mother out to Drangey

Thorbiorn Angle had a foster-mother, Thurid by name, exceeding old, and meet for little, as folk deemed, very cunning she had been in many and great matters of lore, when she was young, and men were yet heathen; but men thought of her as of one, who had lost all that. But now, though Christ’s law were established in the land, yet abode still many sparks of heathendom. It had been law in the land, that men were not forbidden to sacrifice secretly, or deal with other lore of eld, but it was lesser outlawry if such doings oozed out. Now in such wise it fared with many, that hand for wont did yearn, and things grew handiest by time that had been learned in youth.

So now, whenas Thorbiorn Angle was empty of all plots, he sought for help there, whereas most folk deemed it most unlike that help wasat the hands of his foster-mother, in sooth, and asked, what counsel was in her therefor.

She answered, "Now belike matters have come to this, even as the saw saysTo the goat-house for wool: but what could I do less than this, to think myself before folk of the country-side, but be a man of nought, whenso anything came to be tried? nor see I how I may fare worse than thou, though I may scarce rise from my bed. But if thou art to have my rede, then shall I have my will as to how and what things are done."

He gave his assent thereto, and said that she had long been of wholesome counsel to him.

Now the time wore on to Twainmonth of summer; and one fair-weather day the carline spake to Angle,

"Now is the weather calm and bright, and I will now that thou fare to Drangey and pick a quarrel with Grettir; I shall go with thee, and watch how heedful he may be of his words; and if I see them, I shall have some sure token as to how far they are befriended of fortune, and then shall I speak over them such words as seem good to me."

Angle answered, "Loth am I to be faring to Drangey, for ever am I of worser mind when I depart thence than when I come thereto."

Then said the carline, "Nought will I do for thee if thou sufferest me to rule in no wise."

"Nay, so shall it not be, foster-mother," said he; "but so much have I said, as that I would so come thither the third time that somewhat should be made of the matter betwixt us."

"The chance of that must be taken," said the carline "and many a heavy labour must thou have, or ever Grettir be laid to earth; and oft will it be doubtful to thee what fortune thine shall be, and heavy troubles wilt thou get therefrom when that is done; yet art thou so bounden here-under, that to somewhat must thou make up thy mind."

Thereafter Thorbiorn Angle let put forth a ten-oared boat, and he went thereon with eleven men, and the carline was in their company.

So they fell to rowing as the weather went, out to Drangey; and when the brothers saw that, they stood forth at the ladders, and they began to talk the matter over yet once more; and Thorbiorn said, that he was come yet again, to talk anew of their leaving the island, and that he would deal lightly with his loss of money and Grettir's dwelling there, if so be they might part without harm. But Grettir said that he had no words to make atwixt and atween of his going thence.

"Oft have I so said," says he, "and no need there is for thee to talk to me thereon; ye must even do as ye will, but here will I abide, whatso may come to hand."

Now Thorbiorn deemed, that this time also his errand was come to nought, and he said,

"Yea, I deemed I knew with what men of hell I had to do; and most like it is that a day or two will pass away ere I come hither again."

"I account that not in the number of my griefs, though thou never comest back," said Grettir.

Now the carline lay in the stern, with clothes heaped up about and over her, and with that she moved, and said,

"Brave will these men be, and luckless withal; far hast thou outdone them in manliness; thou biddest them choice of many goodly things, but they say nay to all, and few things lead surer to ill, than not to know how to take good. Now this I cast over thee, Grettir, that thou be left of all health, wealth, and good-hap, all good heed and wisdom: yea, and that the more, the longer thou livest; good hope I have, Grettir, that thy days of gladness shall be fewer here in time to come than in the time gone by."

Now when Grettir heard these words, he was astonied withal, and said, "What fiend is there in the boat with them?"

"Illugi answers, "I deem that it will be the carline, Thorbiorn's foster-mother."

"Curses on the witch-wight!" says Grettir, "nought worse could have been looked for; at no words have I shuddered like as I shuddered at those words she spake; and well I wot that from her, and her foul cunning, some evil will be brought on us; yet shall she have some token to mind her that she has sought us here."

Therewithal he caught up a marvellous great stone, and cast it down on to the boat, and it smote that clothes-heap; and a longer stone-throw was that than Thorbiorn deemed any man might make; but therewithal a great shriek arose, for the stone had smitten the carline's thigh, and broken it.

Then said Illugi, "I would thou hadst not done that!"

"Blame me not therefor," said Grettir, "I fear me the stroke has been too little, for certes not overmuch weregild were paid for the twain of us, though the price should be one carline's life."

"Must she alone be paid?" said Illugi, "little enough then will be laid down for us twain."

Now Thorbiorn got him gone homeward, with no greetings at parting. But he said to the carline,

"Now have matters gone as I thought, that a journey of little glory thou shouldst make to the island; thou hast got maimed, and honour is no nigher to us than before, yea, we must have bootless shame on bootless shame."

She answered, "This will be the springing of ill-hap to them; and I deem that henceforth they are on the wane; neither do I fear if I live, but that I shall have revenge for this deed they have thus done me."

"Stiff is thine heart, meseems, foster-mother," said Thorbiorn. With that they came home, but the carline was laid in her bed, and abode there nigh a month; by then was the hurt thigh-bone grown together again, and she began to be afoot once more.

Great laughter men made at that journey of Thorbiorn and the carline, and deemed he had been often enow out-played in his dealings with Grettir: first, at the Spring-Thing in the peace handselling; next, when Haering was lost, and now again, this third time, when the carline’s thigh-bone was broken, and no stroke had been played against these from his part. But great shame and grief had Thorbiorn Angle from all these words.

Chapter 81

Of the Carline’s evil Gift to Grettir

Now wore away the time of autumn till it wanted but three weeks of winter; then the carline bade bear her to the sea-shore. Thorbiorn asked what she would there.

"Little is my errand, yet maybe," she says, "it is a foreboding of greater tidings."

Now was it done as she bade, and when she came down to the strand, she went limping along by the sea, as if she were led thereto, unto a place where lay before her an uprooted tree, as big as a man might bear on his shoulder. She looked at the tree and bade them turn it over before her eyes, and on one side it was as if singed and rubbed; so there whereas it was rubbed she let cut a little flat space; and then she took her knife and cut runes on the root, and made them red with her blood, and sang witch-words over them; then she went backwards and widdershins round about the tree, and cast over it many a strong spell; thereafter she let thrust the tree forth into the sea, and spake in such wise over it, that it should drive out to Drangey, and that Grettir should have all hurt therefrom that might be. Thereafter she went back home to Woodwick; and Thorbiorn said that he knew not if that would come to aught; but the carline answered that he should wot better anon.

Now the wind blew landward up the firth, yet the carline’s root went in the teeth of the wind, and belike it sailed swifter than might have been looked for of it.

Grettir abode in Drangey with his fellows as is aforesaid, and in good case they were; but the day after the carline had wrought her witch-craft on the tree the brothers went down below the cliffs searching for firewood, so when they came to the west of the island, there they found that tree drifted ashore.

Then said Illugi, "A big log of firewood, kinsman, let us bear it home."

Grettir kicked it with his foot and said, "An evil tree from evil sent; other firewood than this shall we have."

Therewithal he cast it out into the sea, and bade Illugi beware of bearing it home, "For it is sent us for our ill-hap." And therewith they went unto their abode, and said nought about it to the thrall. But the next day they found the tree again, and it was nigher to the ladders than heretofore; Grettir drave it out to sea, and said that it should never be borne home.

Now the days wore on into summer, and a gale came on with much wet, and the brothers were loth to be abroad, and bade Noise go search for firewood.

He took it ill, and said he was ill served in that he had to drudge and labour abroad in all the foulest weather; but withal he went down to the beach before the ladders and found the carline’s tree there, and deemed things had gone well because of it; so he took it up and bore it to the hut, and cast it down thereby with a mighty thump.

Grettir heard it and said, "Noise has got something, so I shall go out and see what it is."

Therewithal he took up a wood-axe, and went out, and straightway Noise said,

"Split it up in as good wise as I have brought it home, then."

Grettir grew short of temper with the thrall, and smote the axe with both hands at the log, nor heeded what tree it was; but as soon as ever the axe touched the wood, it turned flatlings and glanced off therefrom into Grettir’s right leg above the knee, in such wise that it stood in the bone, and a great wound was that. Then he looked at the tree and said,

"Now has evil heart prevailed, nor will this hap go alone, since that same tree has now come back to us that I have cast out to sea on these two days. But for thee, Noise, two slips hast thou had, first, when thou must needs let the fire be slaked, and now this bearing home of that tree of ill-hap; but if a third thou hast, thy bane will it be, and the bane of us all."

With that came Illugi and bound up Grettir’s hurt, and it bled little, and Grettir slept well that night; and so three nights slipped by in such wise that no pain came of the wound, and when they loosed the swathings, the lips of the wound were come together so that it was well-nigh grown over again. Then said Illugi,

"Belike thou wilt have no long hurt of this wound."

"Well were it then," said Grettir, "but marvellously has this befallen, whatso may come of it; and my mind misgives me of the way things will take."

Chapter 82

Grettir sings of his Great Deeds

Now they lay them down that evening, but at midnight Grettir began to tumble about exceedingly. Illugi asked why he was so unquiet. Grettir said that his leg had taken to paining him, "And methinks it is like that some change of hue there be therein."

Then they kindled a light, and when the swathings were undone, the leg showed all swollen and coal-blue, and the wound had broken open, and was far more evil of aspect than at first; much pain there went therewith so that he might not abide at rest in any wise, and never came sleep on his eyes.

Then spake Grettir, "Let us make up our minds to it, that this sickness which I have gotten is not done for nought, for it is of sorcery, and the carline is minded to avenge her of that stone."

Illugi said, "Yea, I told thee that thou wouldst get no good from that hag."

"All will come to one end," said Grettir, and sang this song withal

"Doubtful played the foredoomed fate
Round the sword in that debate,
When the bearserks’ outlawed crew,
In the days of yore I slew.
Screamed the worm of clashing lands
When Hiarandi dropped his hands
Biorn and Gunnar cast away,
Hope of dwelling in the day.

"Home again then travelled I;
The broad-boarded ship must lie,
Under Door-holm, as I went,
Still with weapon play content,
Through the land; and there the thane
Called me to the iron rain,
Bade me make the spear-storm rise,
Torfi Vebrandson the wise.

"To such plight the Skald was brought,
Wounder of the walls of thought,
Howsoever many men
Stood, all armed, about us then,
That his hand that knew the oar,
Grip of sword might touch no more;
Yet to me the wound who gave
Did he give a horse to have.

"Thorbiorn Arnor’s son, men said,
Of no great deed was afraid,
Folk spake of him far and wide;
He forbade me to abide
Longer on the lovely earth;
Yet his heart was little worth,
Not more safe alone was I,
Than when armed he drew anigh.

"From the sword’s edge and the spears
From my many waylayers,
While might was, and my good day,
Often did I snatch away;
Now a hag, whose life outworn
Well may win the good folk’s scorn,

Wicked craft and ill hath borne,

Meet for death lives long enow,
Grettir’s might to overthrow."

"Now must we take good heed to ourselves," said Grettir, "for Thorbiorn Angle must be minded that this hap shall not go alone; and I will, Noise, that thou watch the ladders every day from this time forth, but pull them up in the evening, and see thou do it well and truly, even as though much lay thereon, but if thou bewrayest us, short will be thy road to ill."

So Noise promised great things concerning this. Now the weather grew harder, and a north-east wind came on with great cold: every night Grettir asked if the ladders were drawn up.

Then said Noise, "Yea, certainly! men are above all things to be looked for now. Can any man have such a mind to take thy life, that he will do so much as to slay himself therefor? for this gale is far other than fair; lo now, methinks thy so great bravery and hardihood has come utterly to an end, if thou must needs think that all things soever will be thy bane."

"Worse wilt thou bear thyself than either of us," said Grettir, "when the need is on us; but now go watch the ladders, whatsoever will thou hast thereto."

So every morning they drave him out, and ill he bore it.

But Grettir’s hurt waxed in such wise that all the leg swelled up, and the thigh began to gather matter both above and below, and the lips of the wound were all turned out, so that Grettir’s death was looked for.

Illugi sat over him night and day, and took heed to nought else, and by then it was the second week since Grettir hurt himself.

Chapter 83

How Thorbiorn Angle gathered Force and set Sail for Drangey.

Thorbiorn Angle sat this while at home at Woodwick, and was ill-content in that he might not win Grettir; but when a certain space had passed since the carline had put the sorcery into the root, she comes to talk with Thorbiorn, and asks if he were not minded to go see Grettir. He answers, that to nought was his mind so made up as that he would not go; "perchance thou wilt go meet him, foster-mother," says Thorbiorn.

"Nay, I shall not go meet-him," says the carline; "but I have sent my greeting to him, and some hope I have that it has come home to him; and good it seems to me that thou go speedily to meet him, or else shalt thou never have such good hap as to overcome him."

Thorbiorn answered: "So many shameful journeys have I made thither, that there I go not ever again; moreover that alone is full enough to stay me, that such foul weather it is, that it is safe to go nowhither, whatso the need may be."

She answered: "Ill counselled thou art, not to see how to overcome herein. Now yet once again will I lay down a rede for this; go thou first and get thee strength of men, and ride to Hof to Halldor thy brother-in-law, and take counsel of him. But if I may rule in some way how Grettir’s health goes, how shall it be said that it is past hope that I may also deal with the gale that has been veering about this

while?"

Thorbiorn deemed it might well be that the carline saw further than he had thought she might, and straightway sent up into the country-side for men; but speedy answer there came that none of those who had given up their shares would do aught to ease his task, and they said that Thorbiorn should have to himself both the owning of the island and the onset on Grettir. But Tongue-Stein gave him two of his followers, and Hialti, his brother, sent him three men, and Eric of God-dales one, and from his own homestead he had six. So the twelve of them ride from Woodwick out to Hof. Halldor bade them abide there, and asked their errand; then Thorbiorn told it as clearly as might be. Halldor asked whose rede this might be, and Thorbiorn said that his foster-mother urged him much thereto.

"That will bear no good," said Halldor, "because she is cunning in sorcery, and such-like things are now forbidden."

"I may not look closely into all these matters before-hand," said Thorbiorn, "but in somewise or other shall this thing have an end if I may have my will. Now, how shall I go about it, so that I may come to the island?"

"Meseems," says Halldor, "that thou trustest in somewhat, though I wot not how good that may be. But now if thou wilt go forward with it, go thou out to Meadness in the Fleets to Biorn my friend; a good keel he has, so tell him of my word, that I would he should lend you the craft, and thence ye may sail out to Drangey. But the end of your journey I see not, if Grettir is sound and hale: yea, and be thou sure that if ye win him not in manly wise, he leaves enough of folk behind to take up the blood-suit after him. And slay not Illugi if ye may do otherwise. But methinks I see that all is not according to Christ’s law in these redes."

Then Halldor gave them six men withal for their journey; one was called Karr, another Thorleif, and a third Brand, but the rest are not named.

So they fared thence, eighteen in company, out to the Fleets, and came to Meadness and gave Biorn Halldor’s message, he said that it was but due for Halldor’s sake, but that he owed nought to Thorbiorn; withal it seemed to him that they went on a mad journey, and he let them from it all he might.

They said they might not turn back, and so went down to the sea, and put forth the craft, and all its gear was in the boat-stand hard by; so they made them ready for sailing, and foul enow the weather seemed to all who stood on land. But they hoisted sail, and the craft shot swiftly far into the firth, but when they came out into the main part thereof into deep water, the wind abated in such wise that they deemed it blew none too hard.

So in the evening at dusk they came to Drangey.

Chapter 84

The Slaying of Grettir Asmundson

Now it is to be told, that Grettir was so sick, that he might not stand on his feet, but Illugi sat beside him, and Noise was to keep watch and ward; and many words he had against that, and said that they would still think that life was falling from them, though nought had happed to bring it about; so he went out from their abode right unwillingly, and when he came to the ladders he spake to himself and said that now he would not draw them up; withal he grew exceeding sleepy, and lay down and slept all

day long, and right on till Thorbiorn came to the island.

So now they see that the ladders are not drawn up; then spake Thorbiorn, "Now are things changed from what the wont was, in that there are none afoot, and their ladder stands in its place withal; maybe more things will betide in this our journey than we had thought of in the beginning: but now let us hasten to the hut, and let no man lack courage; for, wot this well, that if these men are hale, each one of us must needs do his best."

Then they went up on to the island, and looked round about, and saw where a man lay a little space off the landing-place, and snored hard and fast. Therewith Thorbiorn knew Noise, and went up to him and drave the hilt of his sword against the ear of him, and bade him, "Wake up, beast! certes in evil stead is he who trusts his life to thy faith and troth."

Noise looked up thereat and said, "Ah! now are they minded to go on according to their wont; do ye, may-happen, think my freedom too great, though I lie out here in the cold?"

"Art thou witless," said Angle, "that thou seest not that thy foes are come upon thee, and will slay you all?"

Then Noise answered nought, but yelled out all he might, when he knew the men who they were.

"Do one thing or other," says Angle, "either hold thy peace forthwith, and tell us of your abode, or else be slain of us."

Thereat was Noise as silent as if he had been thrust under water; but Thorbiorn said, "Are they at their hut, those brothers? Why are they not afoot?"

"Scarce might that be," said Noise, "for Grettir is sick and come nigh to his death, and Illugi sits over him."

Then Angle asked how it was with their health, and what things had befallen. So Noise told him in what wise Grettir’s hurt had come about.

Then Angle laughed and said, "Yea, sooth is the old saw, Old friends are the last to sever; and this withal, Ill if a thrall is thine only friend, whereso thou art, Noise; for shamefully hast thou bewrayed thy master, albeit he was nought good."

Then many laid evil things to his charge for his ill faith, and beat him till he was well-nigh past booting for, and let him lie there; but they went up to the hut and smote mightily on the door.

"Pied-belly is knocking hard at the door, brother," says Illugi.

"Yea, yea, hard, and over hard," says Grettir; and therewithal the door brake asunder.

Then sprang Illugi to his weapons and guarded the door, in such wise that there was no getting in for them. Long time they set on him there, and could bring nought against him save spear-thrusts, and still Illugi smote all the spear-heads from the shafts. But when they saw that they might thus bring nought to pass, they leapt up on to the roof of the hut, and tore off the thatch; then Grettir got to his feet and caught up a spear, and thrust out betwixt the rafters; but before that stroke was Karr, a home-man of Halldor of Hof, and forthwithal it pierced him through.

Then spoke Angle, and bade men fare warily and guard themselves well, "for we may prevail against them if we follow wary redes."

So they tore away the thatch from the ends of the ridge-beam, and bore on the beam till it brake asunder.

Now Grettir might not rise from his knee, but he caught up the short-sword, Karr's-loom, and even therewith down leapt those men in betwixt the walls, and a hard fray befell betwixt them. Grettir smote with the short-sword at Vikar, one of the followers of Hialti Thordson, and caught him on the left shoulder, even as he leapt in betwixt the walls, and cleft him athwart the shoulder down unto the right side, so that the man fell asunder, and the body so smitten atwain tumbled over on to Grettir, and for that cause he might not heave aloft the short-sword as speedily as he would, and therewith Thorbiorn Angle thrust him betwixt the shoulders, and great was that wound he gave.

Then cried Grettir, "Bare is the back of the brotherless." And Illugi threw his shield over Grettir, and warded him in so stout a wise that all men praised his defence.

Then said Grettir to Angle, "Who then showed thee the way here to the island?"

Said Angle, "The Lord Christ showed it us."

"Nay," said Grettir, "but I guess that the accursed hag, thy foster-mother, showed it thee, for in her redes must thou needs have trusted."

"All shall be one to thee now," said Angle, "in whomsoever I have put my trust."

Then they set on them fiercely, and Illugi made defence for both in most manly wise; but Grettir was utterly unmeet for fight, both for his wounds' sake and for his sickness. So Angle bade bear down Illugi with shields, "For never have I met his like, amongst men of such age."

Now thus they did, besetting him with beams and weapons till he might ward himself no longer; and then they laid hands on him, and so held him fast. But he had given some wound or other to the more part of those who had been at the onset, and had slain outright three of Angle's fellows.

Thereafter they went up to Grettir, but he was fallen forward on to his face, and no defence there was of him, for that he was already come to death's door by reason of the hurt in his leg, for all the thigh was one sore, even up to the small guts; but there they gave him many a wound, yet little or nought he bled.

So when they thought he was dead, Angle laid hold of the short-sword, and said that he had carried it long enough; but Grettir's fingers yet kept fast hold of the grip thereof, nor could the short-sword be loosened; many went up and tried at it, but could get nothing done therewith; eight of them were about it before the end, but none the more might bring it to pass.

Then said Angle, "Why should we spare this wood-man here? lay his hand on the block."

So when that was done they smote off his hand at the wrist, and the fingers straightened, and were loosed from the handle. Then Angle took the short-sword in both hands and smote at Grettir's head, and a right great stroke that was, so that the short-sword might not abide it, and a shard was broken from the midst of the edge thereof; and when men saw that, they asked why he must needs spoil a fair thing in such wise.

But Angle answered, "More easy is it to know that weapon now if it should be asked for."

They said it needed not such a deed since the man was dead already.

"Ah! but yet more shall be done," said Angle, and hewed therewith twice or thrice at Grettir’s neck, or ever the head came off; and then he spake,

"Now know I for sure that Grettir is dead."

In such wise Grettir lost his life, the bravest man of all who have dwelt in Iceland; he lacked but one winter of forty-five years whenas he was slain; but he was fourteen winters old when he slew Skeggi, his first man-slaying; and from thenceforth all things turned to his fame, till the time when he dealt with Glam, the Thrall; and in those days was he of twenty winters-; but when he fell into outlawry, he was twenty-five years old; but in outlawry was he nigh nineteen winters, and full oft was he the while in great trials of men; and such as his life was, and his needs, he held well to his faith and troth, and most haps did he foresee, though he might do nought to meet them.

Chapter 85

How Thorbiorn Angle claimed Grettir’s Head-money.

"A great champion have we laid to earth here," said Thorbiorn; "now shall we bring the head aland with us, for I will not lose the money which has been laid thereon; nor may they then feign that they know not if I have slain Grettir."

They bade him do his will, but had few words to say hereon, for to all the deed seemed a deed of little prowess.

Then Angle fell to speaking with Illugi,

"Great scathe it is of such a brave man as thou art, that thou hast fallen to such folly, as to betake thee to ill deeds with this outlaw here, and must needs lie slain and unatoned therefore."

Illugi answered, "Then first when the Althing is over this summer, wilt thou know who are outlaws; but neither thou nor the carline, thy foster-mother, will judge in this matter, because that your sorcery and craft of old days have slain Grettir, though thou didst, indeed, bear steel against him, as he lay at death’s door, and wrought that so great coward’s deed there, over and above thy sorcery."

Then said Angle, "In manly wise speakest thou, but not thus will it be; and I will show thee that I think great scathe in thy death, for thy life will I give thee if thou wilt swear an oath for us here, to avenge thyself on none of those who have been in this journey."

Illugi said, "That might I have deemed a thing to talk about, if Grettir had been suffered to defend himself, and ye had won him with manliness and hardihood; but now nowise is it to be thought, that I will do so much for the keeping of my life, as to become base, even as thou art: and here I tell thee, once for all, that no one of men shall be of less gain to thee than I, if I live; for long will it be or ever I forget how ye have prevailed against Grettir.Yea, much rather do I choose to die."

Then Thorbiorn Angle held talk with his fellows, whether they should let Illugi live or not; they said that, whereas he had ruled the journey, so should he rule the deeds; so Angle said that he knew not how to have that man hanging over his head, who would neither give troth, nor promise aught.

But when Illugi knew that they were fully minded to slay him, he laughed, and spake thus,

"Yea, now have your counsels sped, even as my heart would."

So at the dawning of the day they brought him to the eastern end of the island, and there slaughtered him; but all men praised his great heart, and deemed him unlike to any of his age.

They laid both the brothers in cairn on the island there; and thereafter took Grettir’s head, and bore it away with them, and whatso goods there were in weapons or clothes; but the good short-sword Angle would not put into the things to be shared, and he bare it himself long afterwards. Noise they took with them, and he bore himself as ill as might be.

At nightfall the gale abated, and they rowed aland in the morning. Angle took land at the handiest place, and sent the craft out to Biorn; but by then they were come hard by Oyce-land, Noise began to bear himself so ill, that they were loth to fare any longer with him, so there they slew him, and long and loud he greeted or ever he was cut down.

Thorbiorn Angle went home to Woodwick, and deemed he had done in manly wise in this journey; but Grettir’s head they laid in salt in the out-bower at Woodwick, which was called therefrom Grettir’s-bower; and there it lay the winter long. But Angle was exceeding ill thought of for this work of his, as soon as folk knew that Grettir had been overcome by sorcery.

Thorbiorn Angle sat quiet till past Yule; then he rode to meet Thorir of Garth, and told him of these slayings; and this withal, that he deemed that money his due which had been put on Grettir’s head. Thorir said that he might not hide that he had brought about Grettir’s outlawry,

"Yea, and oft have I dealt hardly with him, yet so much for the taking of his life I would not have done, as to make me a misdoer, a man of evil craft, even as thou hast done; and the less shall I lay down that money for thee, in that I deem thee surely to be a man of forfeit life because of thy sorcery and wizard-craft."

Thorbiorn Angle answers, "Meseems thou art urged hereto more by closefistedness and a poor mind, than by any heed of how Grettir was won."

Thorir said that a short way they might make of it, in that they should abide the Althing, and take whatso the Lawman might deem most rightful: and in such wise they parted that there was no little ill-will betwixt Thorir and Thorbiorn Angle.

Chapter 86

How Thorbiorn Angle brought Grettir’s Head to Biarg

The kin of Grettir and Illugi were exceeding ill-content when they heard of these slayings, and they so looked on matters as deeming that Angle had wrought a shameful deed in slaying a man at death’s door; and that, besides that, he had become guilty of sorcery. They sought the counsel of the wisest men, and everywhere was Angle’s work ill spoken of. As for him, he rode to Midfirth, when it lacked four weeks of summer; and when his ways were heard of, Asdis gathered men to her, and there came many of her friends: Gamli and Glum, her brothers-in-law, and their sons, Skeggi, who was called the Short-handed, and Uspak, who is aforesaid. Asdis was so well befriended, that all the Midfirthers came to aid her; yea, even those who were aforetime foes to Grettir; and the first man there was Thorod Drapa-Stump, and the more part of the Ramfirthers.

Now Angle came to Biarg with twenty men, and had Grettir’s head with him; but not all those had come yet who had promised aid to Asdis; so Angle and his folk went into the chamber with the head, and set it down on the floor; the goodwife was there in the chamber, and many men with her; nor did it come to greetings on either side; but Angle sang this stave

"A greedy head I bring with me
Up from the borders of the sea;
Now may the needle-pliers weep,
The red-haired outlaw lies asleep;
Gold-bearer, cast adown thine eyes,
And see how on the pavement lies,
The peace-destroying head brought low,
That but for salt had gone ere now."

The goodwife sat silent when he gave forth the stave, and thereafter she sang

"O thou poor wretch, as sheep that flee
To treacherous ice when wolves they see,
So in the waves would ye have drowned
Your shame and fear, had ye but found
That steel-god hale upon the isle:
Now heavy shame, woe worth the while!
Hangs over the north country-side,
Nor I my loathing care to hide."

Then many said that it was nought wonderful, though she had brave sons, so brave as she herself was, amid such grief of heart as was brought on her.

Uspak was without, and held talk with such of Angle’s folk as had not gone in, and asked concerning the slayings; and all men praised Illugi’s defence; and they told withal how fast Grettir had held the short-sword after he was dead, and marvellous that seemed to men.

Amidst these things were seen many men riding from the west, and thither were coming many friends of the goodwife, with Gamli and Skeggi west from Meals.

Now Angle had been minded to take out execution after Illugi, for he and his men claimed all his goods; but when that crowd of men came up, Angle saw that he might do nought therein, but Gamli and Uspak were of the eagerest, and were fain to set on Angle; but those who were wisest bade them take the rede of Thorwald their kinsman, and the other chief men, and said that worse would be deemed of Angle’s case the more wise men sat in judgment over it; then such truce there was that Angle rode away, having Grettir’s head with him, because he was minded to bear it to the Althing.

So he rode home, and thought matters looked heavy enough, because well-nigh all the chief men of the land were either akin to Grettir and Illugi, or tied to them and theirs by marriage: that summer, moreover, Skeggi the Short-handed took to wife the daughter of Thorod Drapa-Stump, and therewithal Thorod joined Grettir’s kin in these matters.

Chapter 87

Affairs at the Althing

Now men rode to the Althing, and Angle's helpers were fewer than he had looked for, because that his case was spoken ill of far and wide.

Then asked Halldor whether they were to carry Grettir's head with them to the Althing.

Angle said that he would bear it with him.

"Ill-counselled is that," said Halldor; "for many enough will thy foes be, though thou doest nought to jog the memories of folk, or wake up their grief."

By then were they come on their way, and were minded to ride south over the Sand; so Angle let take the head, and bury it in a hillock of sand, which is called Grettir's Hillock.

Thronged was the Althing, and Angle put forth his case, and praised his own deeds mightily, in that he had slain the greatest outlaw in all the land, and claimed the money as his, which had been put on Grettir's head. But Thorir had the same answer for him as was told afore.

Then was the Lawman prayed for a decision, and he said that he would fain hear if any charges came against this, whereby Angle should forfeit his blood-money, or else he said he must have whatsoever had been put on Grettir's head.

Then Thorvald Asgeirson called on Skeggi the Short-handed to put forth his case, and he summoned Thorbiorn Angle with a first summons for the witch-craft and sorcery, whereby Grettir must have got his bane, and then with another summons withal, for that they had borne weapons against a half-dead man, and hereon he claimed an award of outlawry.

Now folk drew much together on this side and on that, but few they were that gave aid to Thorbiorn; and things turned out otherwise than he had looked for, because Thorvald, and Isleif, his son-in-law, deemed it a deed worthy of death to bring men to their end by evil sorcery; but through the words of wise men these cases had such end, that Thorbiorn should sail away that same summer, and never come back to Iceland while any such were alive, as had the blood-suit for Grettir and Illugi.

And then, moreover, was it made law that all workers of olden craft should be made outlaws.

So when Angle saw what his lot would be, he gat him gone from the Thing, because it might well hap that Grettir's kin would set on him; nor did he get aught of the fee that was put on Grettir's head, for that Stein the Lawman would not that it should be paid for a deed of shame. None of those men of Thorbiorn's company who had fallen in Drangey were atoned, for they were to be made equal to the slaying of Illugi, but their kin were exceeding ill content therewith.

So men rode home from the Thing, and all blood-suits that men had against Grettir fell away.

Skeggi, the son of Gamli, who was son-in-law of Thorod Drapa-Stump, and sister's son of Grettir, went north to Skagafirth at the instance of Thorvald Asgeirson, and Isleif his son-in-law, who was afterwards Bishop of Skalholt, and by the consent of all the people got to him a keel, and went to Drangey to seek the corpses of the brothers, Grettir and Illugi; and he brought them back to Reeks, in Reek-strand, and buried them there at the church; and it is for a token that Grettir lies there, that in the days of the Sturlungs, when the church of the Reeks was moved, Grettir's bones were dug up, nor

were they deemed so wondrous great, great enough though they were. The bones of Illugi were buried afterwards north of the church, but Grettir’s head at home in the church at Biarg.

Goodwife Asdis abode at home at Biarg, and so well beloved she was, that no trouble was ever brought against her, no, not even while Grettir was in outlawry.

Skeggi the Short-handed took the household at Biarg after Asdis, and a mighty man he was; his son was Gamli, the father of Skeggi of Scarf-stead, and Asdis the mother of Odd the Monk. Many men are come from him.

Chapter 88

Thorbiorn Angle goes to Norway, and thence to Micklegarth

Thornbiorn Angle took ship at Goose-ere, with whatso of his goods he might take with him; but Hialti his brother took to him his lands, and Angle gave him Drangey withal. Hialti became a great chief in aftertimes, but he has nought more to do with this tale.

So Angle fared out to Norway; he yet made much of himself, for he deemed he had wrought a great deed in the slaying of Grettir, and so thought many others, who knew not how all had come to pass, for many knew how renowned a man Grettir had been; withal Angle told just so much of their dealings together as might do him honour, and let such of the tale lie quiet as was of lesser glory.

Now this tale came in the autumn-tide east to Tunsberg, and when Thorstein Dromund heard of the slayings he grew all silent, because it was told him that Angle was a mighty man and a hardy; and he called to mind the words which he had spoken when he and Grettir talked together, long time agone, concerning the fashion of their arms.

So Thorstein put out spies on Angle’s goings; they were both in Norway through the winter, but Thorbiorn was in the north-country, and Thorstein in Tunsberg, nor had either seen other; yet was Angle ware that Grettir had a brother in Norway, and thought it hard to keep guard of himself in an unknown land, wherefore he sought counsel as to where he should betake himself. Now in those days many Northmen went out to Micklegarth, and took war-pay there; so Thorbiorn deemed it would be good to go thither and get to him thereby both fee and fame, nor to abide in the North-lands because of the kin of Grettir. So he made ready to go from Norway, and get him gone from out the land, and made no stay till he came to Micklegarth, and there took war-hire.

Chapter 89

How the Short-Sword was the easier known when sought for by reason of the notch in the blade

Thorstein Dromund was a mighty man, and of the greatest account; and now he heard that Thorbiorn Angle had got him gone from the land out to Micklegarth; speedy were his doings thereon, he gave over his lands into his kinsmen’s hands, and betook himself to journeying and to search for Angle; and ever he followed after whereas Angle had gone afore, nor was Angle ware of his goings.

So Thorstein Dromund came out to Micklegarth a little after Angle, and was fain above all things to slay him, but neither knew the other. Now had they will to be taken into the company of the Varangians, and the matter went well as soon as the Varangians knew that they were Northmen; and in those days was Michael Katalak king over Micklegarth.

Thorstein Dromund watched for Angle, if in some wise he might know him, but won not the game because of the many people there; and ever would he lie awake, ill-content with his lot, and thinking how great was his loss.

Now hereupon it befell that the Varangians were to go on certain warfare, and free the land from harrying; and their manner and law it was before they went from home to hold a weapon-show, and so it was now done; and when the weapon-show was established, then were all Varangians to come there, and those withal who were minded to fall into their company, and they were to show forth their weapons.

Thither came both Thorstein and Angle; but Thorbiorn Angle showed forth his weapons first; and he had the short-sword, Grettir’s-loom; but when he showed it many praised it and said that it was an exceeding good weapon, but that it was a great blemish, that notch in the edge thereof; and asked him withal what had brought that to pass.

Angle said it was a thing worthy to be told of, "For this is the next thing to be said," says he, "that out in Iceland I slew that champion who was called Grettir the Strong, and who was the greatest warrior and the stoutest-hearted of all men of that land, for him could no man vanquish till I came forth for that end; and whereas I had the good hap to win him, I took his life; though indeed he had my strength many times over; then I drave this short-sword into his head, and thereby was a shard broken from out its edge."

So those who stood nigh said, that he must have been hard of head then, and each showed the short-sword to the other; but hereby Thorstein deemed he knew now who this man was, and he prayed withal to see the short-sword even as the others; then Angle gave it up with good will, for all were praising his bravery and that daring onset, and even in such wise did he think this one would do; and in no wise did he misdoubt him that Thorstein was there, or that the man was akin to Grettir.

Then Dromund took the short-sword, and raised it aloft, and hewed at Angle and smote him on the head, and so great was the stroke that it stayed but at the jaw-teeth, and Thorbiorn Angle fell to earth dead and dishonoured.

Thereat all men became hushed; but the Chancellor of the town seized Thorstein straightway, and asked for what cause he did such an ill-deed there at the hallowed Thing.

Thorstein said that he was the brother of Grettir the Strong, and that withal he had never been able to bring vengeance to pass till then; so thereupon many put in their word, and said that the strong man must needs have been of great might and nobleness, in that Thorstein had fared so far forth into the world to avenge him: the rulers of the city deemed that like enough; but whereas there was none there to bear witness in aught to Thorstein’s word, that law of theirs prevailed, that whosoever slew a man should lose nought but his life.

So then speedy doom and hard enow did Thorstein get; for in a dark chamber of a dungeon should he be cast and there abide his death, if none redeemed him therefrom with money. But when Thorstein came into the dungeon, there was a man there already, who had come to death’s door from misery; and both foul and cold was that abode; Thorstein spake to that man and said,

"How deemest thou of thy life?"

He answered, "As of a right evil life, for of nought can I be holpen, nor have I kinsmen to redeem me."

Thorstein said, "Nought is of less avail in such matters than lack of good rede; let us be merry then, and do somewhat that will be glee and game to us."

The man said that he might have no glee of aught.

"Nay, then, but let us try it," said Thorstein. And therewithal he fell to singing; and he was a man of such goodly voice that scarcely might his like be found therefor, nor did he now spare himself.

Now the highway was but a little way from the dungeon, and Thorstein sang so loud and clear that the walls resounded therewith, and great game this seemed to him who had been half-dead erst; and in such wise did Thorstein keep it going till the evening.

Chapter 90

How the Lady Spes redeemed Thorstein from the Dungeon

There was a great lady of a castle in that town called Spes, exceeding rich and of great kin; Sigurd was the name of her husband, a rich man too, but of lesser kin than she was, and for money had she been wedded to him; no great love there was betwixt them, for she thought she had been wedded far beneath her; high-minded she was and a very stirring woman.

Now so it befell, that, as Thorstein made him merry that night, Spes walked in the street hard by the dungeon, and heard thence so fair a voice, that she said she had never yet heard its like. She went with many folk, and so now she bade them go learn who had that noble voice. So they called out and asked who lay there in such evil plight; and Thorstein named himself.

Then said Spes, "Art thou a man as much skilled in other matters as in singing?"

He said there was but little to show for that.

"What ill-deed hast thou done," said she, "that thou must needs be tormented here to the death?"

He said that he had slain a man, and avenged his brother thereby, "But I could not show that by witnesses," said Thorstein, "and therefore have I been cast into ward here, unless some man should redeem me, nor do I hope therefor, for no man have I here akin to me."

"Great loss of thee if thou art slain! and that brother of thine whom thou didst avenge, was he a man so famed, then?"

He said that he was more mighty than he by the half; and so she asked what token there was thereof. Then sang Thorstein this stave

"Field of rings, eight men, who raise
Din of sword in clattering ways,
Strove the good short-sword in vain
From the strong dead hand to gain;
So they ever strained and strove,
Till at last it did behove,

The feared quickener of the fight,
From the glorious man to smite."

"Great prowess such a thing shows of the man," said those who understood the stave; and when she knew thereof, she spake thus,

"Wilt thou take thy life from me, if such a choice is given thee?"

"That will I," said Thorstein, "if this fellow of mine, who sits hereby, is redeemed along with me; or else will we both abide here together."

She answers, "More of a prize do I deem thee than him."

"Howsoever that may be," said Thorstein, "we shall go away in company both of us together, or else shall neither go."

Then she went there, whereas were the Varangians, and prayed for freedom for Thorstein, and offered money to that end; and to this were they right willing; and so she brought about by her mighty friendships and her wealth that they were both set free. But as soon as Thorstein came out of the dungeon he went to see goodwife Spes, and she took him to her and kept him privily; but whiles was he with the Varangians in warfare, and in all onsets showed himself the stoutest of hearts.

Chapter 91

Of the doings of Thorstein and the Lady Spes

In those days was Harald Sigurdson at Micklegarth, and Thorstein fell into friendship with him. Of much account was Thorstein held, for Spes let him lack no money; and greatly they turned their hearts one to the other, Thorstein and Spes; and many folk beside her deemed great things of his prowess.

Now her money was much squandered, because she ever gave herself to the getting of great friends; and her husband deemed that he could see that she was much changed, both in temper and many other of her ways, but most of all in the spending of money; both gold and good things he missed, which were gone from her keeping.

So on a time Sigurd her husband talks with her, and says that she has taken to strange ways. "Thou givest no heed to our goods," says he, "but squanderest them in many wise; and, moreover, it is even as if I saw thee ever in a dream, nor ever wilt thou be there whereas I am; and I know for sure that something must bring this about."

She answered, "I told thee, and my kinsfolk told thee, whenas we came together, that I would have my full will and freedom over all such things as it was beseeming for me to bestow, and for that cause I spare not thy goods. Hast thou perchance aught to say to me concerning other matters which may be to my shame?"

He answers, "Somewhat do I misdoubt me that thou holdest some man or other whom thou deemest better than I be."

"I wot not," says she, "what ground there may be thereto; but meseems thou mayest speak with little truth; and yet, none-the-less, we two alone shall not speak on this matter if thou layest this slander on me."

So he let the talk drop for that time; she and Thorstein went on in the same way, nor were they wary of the words of evil folk, for she ever trusted in her many and wise friends. Oft they sat talking together and making merry; and on an evening as they sat in a certain loft, wherein were goodly things of hers, she bade Thorstein sing somewhat, for she thought the goodman was sitting at the drink, as his wont was, so she bolted the door. But, when he had sung a certain while, the door was driven at, and one called from outside to open; and there was come the husband with many of his folk.

The goodwife had unlocked a great chest to show Thorstein her dainty things; so when she knew who was there, she would not unlock the door, but speaks to Thorstein, "Quick is my rede, jump into the chest and keep silent."

So he did, and she shot the bolt of the chest and sat thereon herself; and even therewith in came the husband into the loft, for he and his had broken open the door thereof.

Then said the lady, "Why do ye fare with all this uproar? are your foes after you then?"

The goodman answered, "Now it is well that thou thyself givest proof of thyself what thou art; where is the man who trolled out that song so well e’en now? I wot thou deemest him of far fairer voice than I be."

She said: "Not altogether a fool is he who can be silent; but so it fares not with thee: thou deemest thyself cunning, and art minded to bind thy lie on my back. Well, then, let proof be made thereof! If there be truth in thy words, take the man; he will scarce have leapt out through the walls or the roof."

So he searched through the place, and found him not, and she said, "Why dost thou not take him then, since thou deemest the thing so sure?"

He was silent, nor knew in sooth amid what wiles he was come; then he asked his fellows if they had not heard him even as he had. But whereas they saw that the mistress misliked the matter, their witness came to nought, for they said that oft folk heard not things as they were in very sooth. So the husband went out, and deemed he knew that sooth well enough, though they had not found the man; and now for a long time he left spying on his wife and her ways.

Another time, long after, Thorstein and Spes sat in a certain cloth-bower, and therein were clothes, both cut and uncut, which the wedded folk owned; there she showed to Thorstein many kinds of cloth, and they unfolded them; but when they were least ware of it the husband came on them with many men, and brake into the loft; but while they were about that she heaped up clothes over Thorstein, and leaned against the clothes-stack when they came into the chamber.

"Wilt thou still deny," said the goodman, "that there was a man with thee, when such men there are as saw you both?"

She bade them not to go on so madly. "This time ye will not fail, belike; but let me be at peace, and worry me not."

So they searched through the place and found nought, and at last gave it up.

Then the goodwife answered and said, "It is ever good to give better proof than the guesses of certain folk; nor was it to be looked for that ye should find that which was not. Wilt thou now confess thy folly, husband, and free me from this slander?"

He said, "The less will I free thee from it in that I trow thou art in very sooth guilty of that which I have laid to thy charge; and thou wilt have to put forth all thy might in this case, if thou art to get this thrust from thee."

She said that that was in nowise against her mind, and therewithal they parted.

Thereafter was Thorstein ever with the Varangians, and men say that he sought counsel of Harald Sigurdson, and their mind it is that Thorstein and Spes would not have taken to those redes but for the trust they had in him and his wisdom.

Now as time wore on, goodman Sigurd gave out that he would fare from home on certain errands of his own. The goodwife nowise let him herein; and when he was gone, Thorstein came to Spes, and the twain were ever together. Now such was the fashion of her castle that it was built forth over the sea, and there were certain chambers therein whereunder the sea flowed; in such a chamber Thorstein and Spes ever sat; and a little trap-door there was in the floor of it, whereof none knew but those twain, and it might be opened if there were hasty need thereof.

Now it is to be told of the husband that he went nowhither, save into hiding, that he might spy the ways of the housewife; so it befell that, one night as they sat alone in the sea-loft and were glad together, the husband came on them unawares with a crowd of folk, for he had brought certain men to a window of the chamber, and bade them see if things were not even according to his word: and all said that he spake but the sooth, and that so belike he had done aforetime.

So they ran into the loft, but when Spes heard the crash, she said to Thorstein,

"Needs must thou go down hereby, whatsoever be the cost, but give me some token if thou comest safe from the place."

He said yea thereto, and plunged down through the floor, and the housewife spurned her foot at the lid, and it fell back again into its place, and no new work was to be seen on the floor.

Now the husband and his men came into the loft, and went about searching, and found nought, as was likely; the loft was empty, so that there was nought therein save the floor and the cross-benches, and there sat the goodwife, and played with the gold on her fingers; she heeded them little, and made as if there was nought to do.

All this the goodman thought the strangest of all, and asked his folk if they had not seen the man, and they said that they had in good sooth seen him.

Then said the goodwife, "Hereto shall things come as is said; thrice of yore have all things happed, and in likewise hast thou fared, Sigurd," says she, "for three times hadst thou undone my peace, meseems, and are ye any wiser than in the beginning?"

"This time I was not alone in my tale," said the goodman; "and now to make an end, shall thou go through the freeing by law, for in nowise will I have this shame unbooted."

"Meseems," says the goodwife, "thou biddest me what I would bid of thee, for good above all things I deem it to free myself from this slander, which has spread so wide and high, that it would be great dishonour if I thrust it not from off me."

"In likewise," said the goodman, "shalt thou prove that thou hast not given away or taken to thyself my goods."

She answers, "At that time when I free myself shall I in one wise thrust off from me all charges that thou hast to bring against me; but take thou heed whereto all shall come; I will at once free myself from all words that have been spoken here on this charge that thou now makest."

The goodman was well content therewith, and got him gone with his men.

Now it is to be told of Thorstein that he swam forth from under the chamber, and went aland where he would, and took a burning log, and held it up in such wise that it might be seen from the goodwife’s castle, and she was abroad for long that evening, and right into the night, for that she would fain know if Thorstein had come aland; and so when she saw the fire, she deemed that she knew that Thorstein had taken land, for even such a token had they agreed on betwixt them.

The next morning Spes bade her husband speak of their matters to the bishop, and thereto was he fully ready. Now they come before the bishop, and the goodman put forward all the aforesaid charges against her.

The bishop asked if she had been known for such an one aforetime, but none said that they had heard thereof. Then he asked with what likelihood he brought those things against her. So the goodman brought forward men who had seen her sit in a locked room with a man beside her, and they twain alone: and therewith the goodman said that he misdoubted him of that man beguiling her.

The bishop said that she might well free herself lawfully from this charge if so she would. She said that it liked her well so to do, "and good hope I have," said Spes, "that I shall have great plenty of women to purge me by oath in this case."

Now was an oath set forward in words for her, and a day settled whereon the case should come about; and thereafter she went home, and was glad at heart, and Thorstein and Spes met, and settled fully what they should do.

Chapter 92

Of the Oath that Spes made before the Bishop

Now that day past, and time wore on to the day when Spes should make oath, and she bade thereto all her friends and kin, and arrayed herself in the best attire she had, and many noble ladies went with her.

Wet was the weather about that time, and the ways were miry, and a certain slough there was to go over or ever they might come to the church; and whenas Spes and her company came forth anigh this slough, a great crowd was there before them, and a multitude of poor folk who prayed them of alms, for this was in the common highway, and all who knew her deemed it was their part to welcome her, and prayed for good things for her as for one who had oft holpen them well.

A certain staff-propped carle there was amidst those poor folk, great of growth and long-bearded. Now the women made stay at the slough, because that the great people deemed the passage across over miry, and therewith when that staff-carle saw the goodwife, that she was better arrayed than the other women, he spake to her on this wise,

"Good mistress," said he, "be so lowly as to suffer me to bear thee over this slough, for it is the bounden duty of us staff-carles to serve thee all we may."

"What then," says she, "wilt thou bear me well, when thou mayst not bear thyself?"

"Yet would it show forth thy lowliness," says he, "nor may I offer better than I have withal; and in all things wilt thou fare the better, if thou hast no pride against poor folk."

"Wot thou well, then," says she, "that if thou bearest me not well it shall be for a beating to thee, or some other shame greater yet."

"Well, I would fain risk it," said he; and therewithal he got on to his feet and stood in the slough. She made as if she were sore afeard of his carrying her, yet nathless she went on, borne on his back; and he staggered along exceeding slowly, going on two crutches, and when he got midmost of the slough he began to reel from side to side. She bade him gather up his strength.

"Never shalt thou have made a worse journey than this if thou easiest me down here."

Then the poor wretch staggers on, and gathers up all his courage and strength, and gets close to the dry land, but stumbles withal, and falls head-foremost in such wise, that he cast her on to the bank, but fell into the ditch up to his armpits, and therewithal as he lay there caught at the goodwife, and gat no firm hold of her clothes, but set his miry hand on her knee right up to the bare thigh.

She sprang up and cursed him, and said that ever would evil come from wretched gangrel churles: "and thy full due it were to be beaten, if I thought it not a shame, because of thy misery."

Then said he, "Meted in unlike ways is man’s bliss; me-thought I had done well to thee, and I looked for an alms at thy hands, and lo, in place thereof, I get but threats and ill-usage and no good again withal;" and he made as if he were exceeding angry.

Many deemed that he looked right poor and wretched, but she said that he was the wiliest of old churles; but whereas many prayed for him, she took her purse to her, and therein was many a penny of gold; then she shook down the money and said,

"Take thou this, carle; nowise good were it, if thou hadst not full pay for the hard words thou hadst of me; now have I parted with thee, even according to thy worth."

Then he picked up the gold, and thanked her for her good deed. Spes went to the church, and a great crowd was there before her. Sigurd pushed the case forward eagerly, and bade her free herself from those charges he had brought against her.

She said, "I heed not thy charges; what man dost thou say thou hast seen in my chamber with me? Lo now oft it befalls that some worthy man will be with me, and that do I deem void of any shame; but hereby will I swear that to no man have I given gold, and of no man have I had fleshly defilement save of my husband, and that wretched staff-carle who laid his miry hand on my thigh when I was borne over the slough this same day."

Now many deemed that this was a full oath, and that no shame it was to her, though the carle had laid hand on her unwittingly; but she said that all things must be told even as they were.

Thereafter she swore the oath in such form as is said afore, and many said thereon that she showed the old saw to be true, swear loud and say little. But for her, she said that wise men would think that this was not done by guile.

Then her kin fell to saying that great shame and grief it was for high-born women to have such lying charges brought against them bootless, whereas it was a crime worthy of death if it were openly known of any woman that she had done whoredoms against her husband. Therewithal Spes prayed the bishop to make out a divorce betwixt her and her husband Sigurd, because she said she might nowise bear his slanderous lying charges. Her kinsfolk pushed the matter forward for her, and so brought it about by their urgency that they were divorced, and Sigurd got little of the goods, and was driven away from the land withal, for here matters went as is oft shown that they will, and the lower must lowt; nor could he bring aught about to avail him, though he had but said the very sooth.

Now Spes took to her all their money, and was deemed the greatest of stirring women; but when folk looked into her oath, it seemed to them that there was some guile in it, and were of a mind that wise men must have taught her that way of swearing; and men dug out this withal, that the staff-carle who had carried her was even Thorstein Dromund. Yet for all that Sigurd got no righting of the matter.

Chapter 93

Thorstein and Spes come out to Norway

Thorstein Dromund was with the Varangians while the talk ran highest about these matters; so famed did he become that it was deemed that scarce had any man of the like prowess come thither; the greatest honours he gat from Harald Sigurdson, for he was of his kin; and after his counsels did Thorstein do, as men are minded to think.

But a little after Sigurd was driven from the land, Thorstein fell to wooing Spes to wife, and she took it meetly, but went to her kinsmen for rede; then they held meetings thereon, and were of one accord that she herself must rule the matter; then was the bargain struck, and good was their wedded life, and they were rich in money, and all men deemed Thorstein to be a man of exceeding good luck, since he had delivered himself from all his troubles.

The twain were together for two winters in Micklegarth, and then Thorstein said to his goodwife that he would fain go back to see his possessions in Norway. She said he should have his will, so they sold the lands they had there, and gat them great wealth of chattels, and then betook them from that land, with a fair company, and went all the way till they came to Norway. Thorstein’s kin welcomed them both right heartily, and soon saw that Spes was bountiful and high-minded, and she speedily became exceeding well befriended. Some children they had between them, and they abode on their lands, and were well content with their life.

In those days was Magnus the Good king over Norway. Thorstein soon went to meet him, and had good welcome of him, for he had grown famous for the avenging of Grettir the Strong (for men scarce know of its happening that any other Icelander, save Grettir Asmundson, was avenged in Micklegarth); and folk say that Thorstein became a man of King Magnus, and for nine winters after he had come to Norway he abode in peace, and folk of the greatest honour were they deemed, he and his wife.

Then came home from Micklegarth king Harald Sigurdson, and King Magnus gave him half Norway, and they were both kings therein for a while; but after the death of King Magnus many of those who had been his friends were ill-content, for all men loved him; but folk might not abide the temper of King Harald, for that he was hard and was wont to punish men heavily.

But Thorstein Dromund was fallen into eld, though he was still the halest of men; and now was the slaying of Grettir Asmundson sixteen winters agone.

Chapter 94

Thorstein Dromund and Spes leave Norway again

At that time many urged Thorstein to go meet King Harald, and become his man; but he took not kindly to it.

Then Spes spake, "I will, Thorstein," says she, "that thou go not to meet Harald the king, for to another king have we much more to pay, and need there is that we turn our minds to that; for now we both grow old and our youth is long departed, and far more have we followed after worldly devices, than the teaching of Christ, or the ways of justice and uprightness; now wot I well that this debt can be paid for us neither by our kindred or our goods, and I will that we ourselves should pay it: now will I therefore that we change our way of life and fare away from this land and unto the abode of the Pope, because I well believe that so only may my case be made easy to me."

Thorstein said, "As well known to me as to thee are the things thou talkest of; and it is meet that thou have thy will herein, since thou didst ever give me my will, in a matter of far less hope; and in all things will we do as thou biddest."

This took men utterly unawares; Thorstein was by then sixty-seven years of age, yet hale in all wise.

So now he bid to him all his kindred and folk allied to him, and laid before them the things he had determined on. Wise men gave good words thereto, though they deemed of their departing as of the greatest loss.

But Thorstein said that there was nought sure about his coming back: "Now do I give thanks to all of you," says he, "for the heed ye paid to my goods when I was last away from the land; now I will offer you, and pray you to take to you my children’s havings, and my children, and bring them up according to the manliness that is in you; for I am fallen so far into eld that there is little to say as to whether I may return or not, though I may live; but ye shall in such wise look after all that I leave behind me here, even as if I should never come back to Norway."

Then men answered, that good redes would be plenteous if the housewife should abide behind to look after his affairs; but she said

"For that cause did I come hither from the out-lands, and from Micklegarth, with Thorstein, leaving behind both kin and goods, for that I was fain that one fate might be over us both; now have I thought it good to be here; but I have no will to abide long in Norway or the North-lands if he goes away; ever has there been great love betwixt us withal, and nought has happed to divide us; now therefore will we depart together, for to both of us is known the truth about many things that befell since we first met."

So, when they had settled their affairs in this wise, Thorstein bade chosen folk divide his goods into halves; and his kin took the half which his children were to own, and they were brought up by their father’s kin, and were in aftertimes the mightiest of men, and great kin in the Wick has come from them. But Thorstein and Spes divided their share of the goods, and some they gave to churches for their souls’ health, and some they took with them. Then they betook themselves Romeward, and many folk prayed well for them.

Chapter 95

How Thorstein Dromund and Spes fared to Rome and died there

Now they went their ways till they came to Rome-town; and so when they came before him, who was appointed to hear the shrifts of men, they told him well and truly all things even as they had happed, and with what cunning and craft they had joined together in wedlock; therewithal they gave themselves up with great humility to such penance for the amending of their lives as he should lay on them; but because that they themselves had turned their minds to the atoning of their faults, without any urging or anger from the rulers of the church, they were eased of all fines as much as might be, but were bidden gently that they should now and henceforth concern themselves reasonably for their souls' health, and from this time forward live in chastity, since they had gotten them release from all their guilt; and herewith they were deemed to have fared well and wisely.

Then said Spes, "Now, meseems, our matters have gone well and are come to an end, and no unlucky life have we had together; yet maybe fools will do after the pattern of our former life; now therefore let us make such an end to all, that good men also may follow after us and do the like: so let us go bargain with those who are deft in stone-craft; that they make for each of us a cell of stone, that we may thereby atone for what we have done against God."

So Thorstein laid down money for the making of a stone cell for each of them, and for such-like other things as they might need, and might not be without for the keeping of their lives; and then, when the stone work was done, and the time was meet therefor and all things were ready, they departed their worldly fellowship of their own free will, that they might the more enjoy a holy fellowship in another world. And there they abode both in their stone cells, and lived as long as God would have it, and so ended their lives. And most men say that Thorstein Dromund and Spes his wife may be deemed to be folk of the greatest good luck, all things being accounted of; but neither his children or any of his issue have come to Iceland for a tale to be made of them.

Now Sturla the Lawman says so much as that he deems no outlawed man ever to have been so mighty as Grettir the Strong; and thereto he puts forth three reasons

And first in that he was the wisest of them all; for the longest in outlawry he was of any man, and was never won whiles he was hale.

And again, in that he was the strongest in all the land among men of a like age; and more fitted to lay ghosts and do away with hauntings than any other.

And thirdly, in that he was avenged out in Micklegarth, even as no other man of Iceland has been; and this withal, that Thorstein Dromund, who avenged him, was so lucky a man in his last days.

So here ends the story of Grettir Asmundson, our fellow-countryman. Thank have they who listened thereto; but thank little enow to him who scribbled out the tale.